

The Chronicle of Séert: 1

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The Arabic text and French translation of this Chronicle can be found in *Patrologia Orientalis*:

4 (1909) pp. 215-313

5 (1910) pp. 219-340

7 (1911) pp. 98- 203

13 (1919) pp. 432-639.

This text has no title. The above is the name by which it is usually known. Séert¹ is the home of the library to which the text seems originally to have belonged. The text was first discovered by Mgr Addai Scher in the Patriarchal Library at Mosul, where he copied it in 1902 before he became archbishop of Séert. This copy is called A. He later found 'bien des feuilles' of the same text in the Séert library. This copy is called S. and he states it as his belief that the Mosul copy probably came from Séert. The numbering is the work of Scher, who had to re-arrange the contents of A in the interest of chronological consistency. A note of the editors in *PO* 4 p.218 gives details of others who have worked on the Arabic text and produced the French translation.

The author of the text has been identified as Isho'denah of Basra² by establishing that the Chronicle was used extensively by Elias of Nisibis, who quotes the work of Isho'denah³ on six separate occasions. Scher is quite sure that the Séert and Mosul texts are one single

¹ The diocese of Séert seems to have been created in the mid-16th cent. Addai Scher was the last bishop. He was murdered in the Assyrian Genocide on June 20th 1915, but not before he had rescued many Christians by bribing the local governor with money from the sale of church treasures. For an appraisal of the work of Addai Scher cf. J.-M. Fiey 'L'apport de Mgr Scher à l'hagiographie orientale' *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965) pp. 121-142.

² Pierre Nautin 'L'auteur de la 'Chronique de Séert': Isho'denah of Basra' *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 186 (1974) pp. 113ff.

³ Also known for a work entitled the Book of Chastity.

work. Perhaps the work that we have was compiled in the first half of the 13th cent. In *PO* 13 p.554 the death of the Caliph Zâhir (1226) 'in our time' is recorded, and there is reason to suppose that this information has been added by the copyist. In his review of Scher's first article in *PO* 4 C.F. Seybold⁴ suggested that the al Zâhir mentioned in the Chronicle was in fact the Fatimid Caliph who died of the plague in Egypt in 1036 AD, which appears to date the Chronicle. Scher suggests the names of three people who may have produced this copy.

Scher divides the text into two parts. Part One (*PO* 4 and 5) contains events belonging to the early centuries of Christianity. Part Two⁵ (*PO* 7 and 13) deals with events from 484 to 650. The missing pages at the end of Part One and the beginning of Part Two are those that cover the years from 422 to 484. The entire work can be described as a mixture of legend, rewritten from earlier sources, and reliable historical narrative. One striking feature of the text seems to me to be the relative rarity of Biblical citations and allusions.

The English translation will appear in five parts. It is not intended to be a work of scholarship, but I hope that there will be those who may find it both interesting and useful. I have consulted the French version to extract information that has gone into the notes. I have also added one or two notes of my own. Historically speaking, Part Two seems to be more reliable than Part One.

I have tried to be pragmatic about the transcription of names, but I am not sure that I have always been successful. In the matter of Greek and Latin names, for example, English has tended to use the Latin forms of Greek names, unlike other European languages, e.g. Thucydides as opposed to Thukydides. When it comes to transcribing other languages, e.g. Arabic or Ancient Egyptian, universally acceptable systems are used in the scholarly community, but usually not outside. I have to admit that I have no idea what system is used for Syriac. The result of all this is that there are various systems which seem to have reached the 'peaceful co-existence' mode.

4 In *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 66 (1912) pp. 742-746. I have not read this article. Nautin accepts this identification. There seems to be little to know of this Fatimid ruler, but his permission to reconstruct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1027 after its destruction in 1009 by his father may have made him known and recommended him to Christians

5 It is now known as Paris arabe 6653 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

The translation presented here is from *PO* 4, which contains 30 stories.⁶ Since the stories themselves provide convenient subdivisions, I have used them as the divisions. The numeration provided by Scher is as follows:

pp. 219-300 contain A p.38 - p.64

pp. 303-327 contain S. p.29 - p.40

pp.329-330 contain S. p.64

I hope that this map will be of use to those who, like me, are not not familiar with the region.



⁶ I have reduced the various Arabic words used in the heading of each of the narrative units to 'story' or 'account'.

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[1. Story of Valerian]

The chief priest Novatian ⁷ of the Church at Rome withdrew and said that there was no forgiveness for anyone who apostasized after baptism and he forbade anyone who repented and put on sackcloth and ashes to enter the church. Some supported what he thought and said that there should be no forgiveness for those who apostasized at the time of persecution. Sixty bishops gathered at Rome and excommunicated him and his faction and made him leave the Church.

The Emperor Gallus⁸ changed his policy and reverted to treating Christians⁹ as Decius had done. He then died after a two-year reign. He was succeeded by Valerian, who made his son Gallienus co-regent.¹⁰ At the beginning of his reign he was benevolent to Christians. The leaders of the Church were constantly in his residence, where he honoured them. But an Egyptian magician turned him against the Christians, as Jannes and Jambres had done with Pharaoh.¹¹ He persuaded the Emperor that bad was good and advised him to kill the Christians because they opposed magicians and hated the Roman gods and their idols. And he believed them. They turned him away from good, as the blessed Apostle Paul says: 'Bad words corrupt good intentions.'¹² And the Emperor was persuaded by the Magician to kill new-born children to cut them open and practise magic on them. When he did this, he was justly punished, as the prophet of Israel says: 'They have chosen their life and done their works of abomination. I too chose their dishonour and their loss, said the Lord.'¹³

7 Known also Novatus. He opposed the re-admission into the Church of those who had 'lapsed' in the Decian persecution 251 AD. A certain amount of background can be found in letters 44 to 48 of Cyprian, his opponent. Generally speaking, I will say very little about the forms of the names in this text, except to try to make them intelligible.

8 Gaius Trebonianus Gallus 251-253 AD. He made himself Emperor and minted coins to confirm it.

9 Two names are used in Arabic for Christians, the one here referring to the place where Jesus grew up (Nazareth), the other to his royal status (anointed).

10 253-260 AD

11 2 Tim. 3,8

12 I Cor. 15,33. The Arabic text of Biblical passages quoted or alluded to in the Chronicle bears little resemblance to the text in what might be described as a standard Arabic version, such as the 19th cent. Smith and Van Dyck translation made for the American Bible Society. I will make no further reference to this subject.

13 Is. 66, 3-4

2. Death of Valerian

In the eleventh year of his reign Shapur son Ardashir attacked Rome and laid waste many cities. He conquered Valerian and took him prisoner to Nabatea. Valerian became ill and died there. Those of the fathers who had been exiled by the accursed Valerian returned to their sees. Shapur left Roman territory, taking with him the prisoners he later settled in Iraq and Susiane¹⁴ and Persia and the cities that his father had built. He himself built three cities, all named after himself. One of them, in Maishan, was called Sâd Shapur, which is (now) Deir Mahrâq. One was in Persia, still known as Shapur. He rebuilt Gundishapur, which had become a ruin and called it Antishapur, a Greco-Persian name meaning 'You are a substitute for Shapur.'¹⁵ He built a third city on the Tigris (Digla) and called it Merv-Habor, now known as 'Akborâ, with its surroundings. He settled prisoners in them and gave them land to cultivate and houses to live in. Christians too became more numerous in Persia and they built monasteries and churches. Among them were priests, prisoners from Antioch. They settled in Gundishapur and elected Azduk of Antioch bishop. Demetrius Patriarch¹⁶ of Antioch had fallen ill and died of grief. Before this second exile and after the first exile of Demetrius, Paul of Samosata had become Patriarch of Antioch. Daniel son of Maryam¹⁷ has told the whole history. Shapur also built a city in Kashkar, which he called Hasar Shapur and settled with Easterners. This is the story of its construction. When Shapur went to Persia, he crossed the Kashkar desert and met an old man gathering wood. The king disguised himself and went to ask him about his country and family. He also asked him if it were possible to build a city there. The old man replied: 'If I can learn to write despite my advanced age, you can build a city here.' The king ordered the old man to be entrusted to teachers to carefully instruct him in the religion of the Magi¹⁸ and fire-worshippers until he returned from Istakhr. The old man learned (to write) and the city was built.

Christians spread throughout the entire country and became very numerous in the East. At

14 al Ahwâz. The area around Susa, known to the Persians as Uvaza. Shapur's dates are usually understood to be around 240-270 AD.

15 The Persian name is given in Tabari. The only reference to the Arab historian seems to be via Th. Noeldeke *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (1879) p. 31

16 The unvoiced labio-dental fricative 'f' seems to regularly replace the voiced bilabial plosive 'b' in foreign words in this text.

17 7th cent. historian whose work has not survived.

18 Name given to priests of Zoroaster attested since the 6th cent. BC

Yaranshar, the Archdiocese of Persia, two churches were built. One was called the Roman Church, the other the Karamanian¹⁹, in which the divine offices were celebrated in Syriac and Greek. God was merciful to the Romans by mitigating the distress of exile and servitude in that their situation improved. They prospered in Persia and their situation became better than in their own country. God did not abandon them, in accordance with the word of the prophet to the sons of Israel, consoling them at the moment when the army of Sennacherib invaded and the ten tribes were captured and their hopes were dashed: *If a woman forgets the child who is still in her womb, if she has no pity on the fruit of her insides, if it is possible that she forgets it, I will not forget you. Here, I have written your name on my hand and your walls are always before me.*²⁰ David too said: *I have made merciful the heart of those who have taken them into captivity* '.²¹

It was through a divine gift that the Romans enjoyed the favour of the Persians: they received land from the Persians and were able to spread Christianity in the East. Gallienus, who was in the East, learned that his father had died. So he sent magnificent gifts to Shapur, who accepted them and returned the body of his father in a shroud. The two monarchs became friends and their two empires prospered. Gallienus wrote to all his subjects, telling them to be kind to Christians. He recalled those who had been exiled by his father.

This time witnessed the appearance of Sabellius²² of Egypt. He conceived a theory in which substances²³ are used to designate forces without personal reality. There is only one person and one substance. In the Old Testament, this unique person is called the Father, author of the laws. In the New Testament it appears under the form of the Son and, in the time of the apostles, the Holy Spirit. All are one substance and one person. The doctrine had many followers. Dionysius the Patriarch of Alexandria gathered 28 bishops and excommunicated him and those who believed his teaching.

19 Kerman is in South Central Iran.

20 Is. 49,15

21 Ps. 105,46

22 May have come from Libya. His teaching has been described as a form of 'modalism' because each of the 'persons' of the Trinity is merely a 'mode'.

23 The plural form of a word used to mean hypostasis or person of Trinity: اقانيم

Gallienus was killed as the result of a conspiracy. He was Emperor for fifteen years, eleven during the lifetime of his father and four after his death.

3. Story of the young Roman girls²⁴

When Shapur returned from Roman territory with his prisoners and booty, his enemies in the most remote frontiers of his Kingdom became envious and resolved to attack him. He sent Uliahin²⁵ king of Kafranathan gems and beautiful clothes the like of which could not be found elsewhere in his Kingdom. He also sent him 300 young virgins whom he had taken prisoner from the Romans. He chose them, dressed them in magnificent clothes and gems and had them escorted by envoys. He ordered the envoys to take care of them and to bathe them every three days lest their complexion change. While on the road they learned that they were being sent as a gift to a barbarian king. They would rather die, so they discussed how they might escape being corrupted by the king. The envoys led them to a large river that they might bathe and withdrew. Holding each other by the hand, they drowned themselves. Only a small number of them survived. The envoys took them on to the king. From that moment there was an agreement between him and Shapur. After 32 years on the throne Shapur son Ardashir died.

4. Story of Mani²⁶ and explanation of his instruction

His father was called Fasaq²⁷ and his mother Nushit. His parents called him Cubricus. At the age of seven he was taken prisoner and bought by an Arab woman named Susaba,²⁸ whose

24 Story told elsewhere: John of Ephesus *Ecclesiastical History* part 3, with variant details. There is an account of the bravery of 300 Teuton women captured at the Battle of Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC, who committed mass suicide because their demands had not been met, in Roman writers, such as the 2nd cent. writer L. Florus *Epitome* I, 38: 16-17, and this was clearly so well known that it is found as late as the 5th cent. AD in Jerome Letter 123, 8.

25 The reading seems to be uncertain because the name lacks diacritical marks. Kafranathan: suggestion by *PO* translator that it might refer to Ephtalites or White Huns, whose empire stretched from Afghanistan to China in 6th cent. AD.

26 Story in Socrates *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1, 22. Early life of Mani is told in the 5th cent AD Mani Codex from Assiut in Upper Egypt. Reference is made to the 12th Chronicle of Michael the Syrian throughout this episode.

27 Two forms of the name in Syriac: Patiḳ and Pâtiḳ.

28 Syriac form slightly different. *PO* translator thinks it reflects the name Scythianus, which has been misattributed to the woman.

husband had studied in Egypt and was a follower of Pythagoras. He had a student called Terebinthus. On the death of her husband, the widow married the student, who took her away with the child she had bought. He tried to escape to Babylon. He told the Persians that his mother was the Virgin and that he had visions in the mountains. He wrote four books: Mysteries, True Gospel, Mine of Treasures and Principles of Debates and Contests. He continued to oppress people with his magic. All of this happened during the reign of Philip (the Arab), the Roman Emperor, and Shapur son of Ardashir. He taught the doctrine of two created gods and two creators, good and evil. The good one is beneficent and brings light. The bad one is the wicked god who brings oppression. He acquired a lot of wealth and came to Sa'ir al Nar. His wife took his books, his money, and the money of her first husband. She fell in love with Mani because he was handsome. She gave him her whole fortune together with the books and took him to be her third husband. He studied these books in depth and became learned. The second husband had already won him over to his impious ways. Susaba gave him a lot of money to support him and he applied himself to his studies, but she died before obtaining what she wanted from him. So he took the money and the books and made his way to Susa, his birthplace. He called himself Mani and claimed to be the author of the books and pretended to be a Christian. He was ordained priest by the bishop of Susiane. He taught there, interpreting the books and debating with Jews, Magi and all who attacked Christianity. This hypocrite then claimed to be the Paraclete. He became more deeply immersed in the science of soothsaying and, following the example of Christ, gathered twelve disciples around him. He denied the resurrection of the body and maintained that fire, water and trees have souls and that anyone who pulled up a tree, extinguished a fire and scattered water killed a soul. According to him, the sun and the moon are two ships that carry the souls to a place that was good. He did unspeakable evil.

He called two disciples, Thomas and Addai. He sent Addai to Yemen to get people to believe his stories and Thomas to India. Another disciple, Mâri, remained with him at Susa. Those whom he had sent to Yemen and India returned and informed him that nobody had believed their teaching and nobody wanted to embrace what they said. He then became angry, abandoned the Christianity that he had simulated and invented more perverse novelties. He claimed to be the Paraclete Christ had promised to send to his disciples. He left

with his disciples travelling around and teaching the doctrine he had already preached, for example, that God is known under the aspect of three persons. He maintained that he had not altered his opinion. God is made up two beings: the first, God, is the source of good, the mine of light and benefits; the second, Matter, is the creator of evil, the source of ignorance, darkness and wickedness. The ascent of God on high is without end. The descent of Evil to hell is also without end. Both are removed from the centre. They are two bodies. The creator of evil was one day very disturbed: his children, the demons, the mischievous spirits, fire and water, kept vying with each other until they arrived in the place of the good God. When they saw his light, they wanted it and said: 'Right. If there is food, we will eat it. If there is drink, we will drink it.' And they tried to do just that. When the good God saw this, he took a part of himself and threw it to them. The divine part was revealed to the evil god, who mixed himself with it and thereby created this world. Parts of God are imprisoned in the parts of the evil god. God will gradually reunite the part taken by the evil God with himself and cast away the evil principle, so that this latter will be unable to return to the fray with Him again.

This impious one, this accursed one, this unbeliever (may God curse him for his lies !) denied the resurrection. He said that Christ is the son of this good God and that he himself was his apostle to the parts that had been taken from his being by the evil god to tell them that they will be saved from the prison of the evil god and will return to Him. He said that the spirits transmigrate. He claimed that he was of the same substance as Christ. After deceiving people and spreading his wickedness, he was crucified by Shapur at the gate of Susa. God cursed him and gave him what he deserved.

When Shapur son of Ardashir died he was succeeded by his son Hormiz,²⁹ a good king who administered his Kingdom well. He was merciful to the weak. He ruled for a year and ten months. When Cornelius Pontiff³⁰ of Rome died he was succeeded by Lucius, who died eight months later. The choice of successor fell upon Stephen, his pupil, a good and virtuous man who headed the Church for two years before dying. While he was Pontiff, the question of whether it was necessary to baptize the heretics into the true faith or not: the custom was

²⁹ 271 AD.

³⁰ The word in the text is Patriarch

the laying on of hands and anointing of the forehead. As the discussions increased, Cyprian the Primate of Africa assembled 29 bishops and drew up 20 canons in which he ordered the re-baptism of those who had denied the faith in the Holy Trinity. He followed these canons, and did so on the instructions of Stephen Pontiff of Rome. Dionysius, the pupil of Origen, was Patriarch of Alexandria at that time. He was a wise philosopher. He wrote to Stephen that all heretics had to be re-baptized. He was Pontiff for eleven years before he died.³¹ He wrote several books to refute Sabellius and Nepos³² who lived in his episcopal see.

When Stephen died he was succeeded by Sixtus,³³ who died four years later. After him came his pupil Dionysius, a good and virtuous man who was Pontiff for nine years before dying.

On the death of the Emperor Claudius, Aurelian II succeeded.³⁴ He was astute and intelligent and his palace frequented by philosophers. One day they came to greet him, and he said: 'All of you, be humble before those who instruct you. Learn every day and know that you do not have perfect knowledge. Glorify and honour your masters and do not count yourselves among the great philosophers lest one day you be humiliated.' They replied: 'The Emperor has spoken well. Man must be constantly learning. We know of a famous philosopher who said that the sun was essentially black, but he was killed and his books burned. We know of another similar case and with him the philosopher Andamius ...'³⁵

Under Aurelian 60 bishops gathered at Antioch to excommunicate its Patriarch Paul of Samosata for his false doctrines and the changes he was making to the faith.

5. Story of Paul of Samosata

When Valerian and his son Gallienus were co-Emperors, he persecuted Christians and killed some of them, including the martyr Cyprian. Valerian was attacked and taken prisoner

³¹ 264 AD

³² Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 7,24 mentions the relationship between Dionysius (259-269) and Nepos bishop of the Fayyum, in particular the point about which they disagreed in writing. The Arabic name of Nepos, which is given in the critical apparatus as 'Nifūs', appears in the text as al Muwyay (vel.sim.)

³³ Sixtus II 257-269 AD

³⁴ Claudius II 269-270 AD. Aurelian 270-275 AD

³⁵ Lacuna in the text. There is no note about this in *PO*. I cannot identify him.

by Ardashir king of Persia.³⁶ When Gallienus saw what happened to his father, he stopped treating them as his father had done. He gave them peace and asked for their help.

Paul of Samosata was Patriarch of Antioch at the time. He evolved a new teaching, according to which God is called Father, Son and Holy Spirit only metaphorically. Christ was born of Mary. He is merely a man with no divinity. He was opposed by several bishops, but had much wealth with which he was able to secure the support of the governor of Antioch. He made the nuns sing his hymns on Jesus Christ. The fathers railed at his sermons, and when they gathered to chase the wolf from the flock, he pretended to repent. But when the meeting was over, he returned to his impious ways. The bishops gathered once again and wrote to Dionysius, asking him to attend their council. Dionysius excused himself on the grounds of old age and infirmity. He said that he had excommunicated Paul and that, despite the distance, he was among them. The bishops excommunicated Paul a second time. But he was unwilling to leave Antioch and was supported by the governor, to whom he had given money. The Christians asked Aurelian for help, who ordered him to leave. He remained in exile until he died. May God not sanctify his soul,³⁷ and thanks be to God for ridding the world of his doctrine. Gregory Thaumaturgus attended the council and Domnus, nephew of Demetrius, succeeded Paul. Aurelian was Emperor for five years and killed in the sixth year. During his reign the Christians enjoyed peace. He was succeeded by Tacitus, despite other leading figures in the Empire, but he was killed six months later. His successor Florinus achieved the position by force but was defeated by the leading Romans, who were given to anarchy,³⁸ and killed after reigning a year.

6. Story of St Gregory the miracle-worker

This saint (may he pray to God for us) was born in the Pontus region. He was for a long time a student of Origen the theologian. From his childhood he imitated the saints and lived

³⁶ The standard tradition is that Valerian was taken prisoner by Shapur., as depicted in the low relief at Naqsh-e Rostum.

³⁷ From time to time in this one detects little of the spirit of Christian forgiveness that one might expect.

³⁸ The phrase Crisis of the Third Century is sometimes used of the period.

alone in a cell. God granted him the gift of performing miracles and healing the sick. His virtues and miracles became known and he received the name Thaumaturgus. When he became bishop of Pontus, there were only seventeen Christians there. He spent much of his time converting and baptizing them, with the result that when he died there were only seventeen people in the Pontus who were not Christian. He was one of bishops who excommunicated Paul. He had a brother who followed in his footsteps and also became a bishop.

When Bahram³⁹ the son of Shapur came to the throne, he was benevolent to the Christians and administered a kingdom based on justice. At the beginning of each month he held a council to examine the interests of his subjects. His reign started in the year when Florian the Roman Emperor was assassinated and he reigned for three years and three months. Florian was succeeded by Probus,⁴⁰ and the circumstances being in his favour, he killed his enemies and went to fight the barbarians. After six years and a few months he was poisoned. During his reign mortality at Rome increased from September to March. The main cause was the intense cold.⁴¹ At that time Felix⁴² was Pontiff at Rome for six years and he was succeeded by Eutychian for one year, who in turn was succeeded by Caius who remained on the pontifical throne for fifteen years.

7. Story of St Eugene⁴³

At this time St Eugene appeared in the land of the Copts. He came from Klysma.⁴⁴ was a diver for pearls, which he sold and then gave the money to the poor. He did this work for twenty-five years. He walked on the water before the boats as a man walks on dry land. One day he saw a star walking in front of him on the water. Another time pirates tried to assault a ship in which there was large amount of money. He thus began to pray to God, and a storm arose that snatched the vessel from their hands and deposited it on the island where the saint

39 Bahram I 273-276 AD

40 276-282 AD. He achieved a certain celebrity by allowing all Gauls, Spaniards and Britons 'ut vites haberent vinumque conficerent'(to own grapes and make wine). *Historia Augusta* 18.

41 As one might expect this is not mentioned in *Historia Augusta*.

42 Felix I 269-274 AD

43 Receives a notice in Palladius *Lausiac History*, but not a great Saint in the Coptic Church.

44 Suez. A story of Djidjoi in the Coptic *Apophthegmata Patrum* refers to Klysma as an 'island'.

lived. The men in the boat were astonished by what they had witnessed and gave the saint 30 talents⁴⁵ of gold. With the money he built a monastery there.

His fame spread throughout the land. He left his place for the monastery of Pachomius at Scetis.⁴⁶ He found brothers there heating an oven to bake bread. He took out embers and, standing in the middle of the oven, prayed. After blessing all the fathers living in the desert, he left. 70 people followed him as far as Nisibis. He lived near the mountain called Izala. The saint performed countless miracles, which are related in his history.⁴⁷ Because of the many visitors he built a monastery on the mountain where the monks could gather. He cured the son of Cerdon, governor of Nisibis, of an incurable illness. The governor and his entire family were baptized and he wrote to Constantine the Emperor to inform him. Eugenius predicted what would happen to the Church because of Arius and how his affair with the 318⁴⁸ would end. He then realized that he would have travel through the land with his children to convert people to the true faith. Large numbers were converted at at Qarda and Beit Zabda and Nisibis during the reign of Shapur, the enemy of the Christians. When he was advanced in years, Eugenius left his disciples. Each one of the went where God, the almighty and powerful, wanted. They built buildings, churches and monasteries. He died and was buried where he had lived. He had two sisters, one called Thekla and the other Stratonike.

8. Account of 'mulâfna',⁴⁹ namely scholars

In the days of Shahlouba and Papa, the two Metropolitans of the East, and Stephen Pontiff of Rome, there were eminent scholars: David bishop of Basra, who left his see and travelled to India, where he made many converts; Gadhimhab, bishop of Gondishapur; Ebed-Jesus, bishop of Kasker; John, bishop of Maishan; Andrew, bishop Deir Mahraq; Abraham, bishop of Shoushter; Milas al-Razi, bishop of Susa. These are the ones who assembled to censure Papa. In the Roman empire the scholars were Anatolius, bishop of

45 ^{مئقال} According to H. Wehr *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1961) just under 5 g in modern Egypt

46 Cenobitic monastery. Written by someone unfamiliar with Egypt.

47 Paul Bedjan *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* vol. 2 (pp.376-480)

48 The number seems to have a certain resonance in Eastern Christianity.

49 I cannot identify this word. The French translator seems to ignore it.

Laodicea; Theonas, Patriarch of Alexandria; Timaeus of Antioch. In Alexandria there were two priests Pierius and Achilles and at Caesarea Alacunaius. All were relentless opponents of the heresiarchs Simon,⁵⁰ Marcion and Mani.

9. Account of king Bahram son of Hawaran son of Shapur

When this man was king of Persia, in the year 590 of Alexander,⁵¹ he was benevolent to his subjects. His soldiers were very happy with him. At the start of his reign he went to al Ahwaz (Susiane). He examined Christianity, as his grandfather had done. He knew something about it, because he had been brought up in Karkha Judan, according to what Milas al-Razi says. He had learned a little Syriac. He had the fathers come to him and they explained the teachings to him. They said to him: 'I see that you regard this unique being as great and acknowledge and exalt him. but you are mistaken in prohibiting adoration of the gods.' Then he changed his opinion. Seeing that Manichaeans called themselves Christians, dressed like them⁵² and rejected marriage and the family, as the metropolitan and the bishops in this picture, he thought, because of his bad intentions, that the two religions were in agreement. He thus ordered Manichaeans to be killed and their churches to be destroyed. The Magi then persecuted the Christians indiscriminately. They killed Qandirâ his wife, who was Roman by birth, because she was a Christian. He also had the blessed Qâribâ, son of Ananias, killed. The Magi oppressed the Christians, and Papas⁵³ endured great suffering. The Christians complained to Bahram about what was happening to them. He asked them why their archbishop and bishops rejected marriage and the procreation of children. He said: 'If they think this is bad and prohibit it, they deserve to die, because they wish to destroy the world. If they think it is good and permissible, why do their leaders reject and despise it?' The Christians replied that Manicheans believed in two ancient gods: the earth is animated and has a soul, souls transmigrate from one body to another and marriage is wicked. Christians believe in one God, creator of all, eternal and they teach that marriage is good

50 My guess is that the 'arch-heretic' Simon Magus is meant. The others are known from Michael the Syrian, Sozomen and Eusebius

51 I take this to be what is generally known as the Seleucid era starting in 311 BC. It is also sometimes known as the Year of the Greeks. It was used by Nestorians until the 14th cent. cf. A. Mingana 'The early spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East' *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 9 (1925): 41ff.

52 Seems to imply that Manichaean dress was distinctive enough to identify them, as later on this section

53 Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon d. 327

and order it in their books. But their leaders reject it so that they will not be prevented from doing what has been enjoined upon them, namely pastoral care, prayer and the intercession for the world and its people, the king and the Kingdom. Manicheans dress like Christians to conceal themselves. The king then accepted their response and ordered persecution of them to stop. He changed his behaviour and died after having reigned for 19 years and 10 months. Carus, Roman Emperor, adopted his two sons, Carinus and Numerianus, to whom he gave Syria, while he kept Rome and Italy. He said to his sons: 'There are three things of which the king, judge or governor should not be ashamed and which he must accomplish: standing up to greet his father, being mounted on his horse to wait for his men and raising his children during his lifetime.'

After three years he came to the region of Nisibis and, as result of the change of climate, died and was taken to Rome. At that time Carinus was killed in Barqâ. When Numerianus saw that Diocletian had been given to him as an imperial colleague, he conspired against him, killed him and ruled alone. He then allied himself with Maximian, whom he married to the daughter of Constantine. He was gentle and humble. The Kingdom was divided into four parts.⁵⁴ Each one was called Caesar. At the beginning of their reign, the Church was at peace until God neglected it, as the prophet said: *I have left my house, I have abandoned my heritage and delivered the dearly beloved of my soul into her enemies.*⁵⁵ And: *The Lord has abandoned Zion and thrown the crown of Israel to the ground.*⁵⁶ The devil entered Diocletian, his son-in-law and his son and drove them to persecute the Christians. On Easter day in the thirteenth year of Diocletian they wrote to their lieutenants in all the countries, telling them to destroy churches and monasteries, burn their books, destroy the houses of the bishops, priests and all Christians if they did not sacrifice to idols and to make them endure all manner of torture. Many Christians were killed: some were stoned, some thrown to wild animals, and some tortured. This happened in Syria, Egypt and Nisibis. Chrstians were forbidden to offer pubic service. Their blood flowed like water, and many denied their faith because of the cruelty. Diocletian had said that he would leave no trace of

⁵⁴ The sequence of events known from Latin sources: when Carus died, Carinus and Numerianus were *augusti*. Numerianus died in Bithynia while retreating from Persia. Diocletian the commander of the Imperial cavalry, was chosen by the army generals in 284 to succeed him. The Tetrarchy usually refers to the institution created by Diocletian in 293, probably to put an end to the imperial vertigo of the 3rd cent.

⁵⁵ Jer. 12, 7

⁵⁶ Lam.2,5

Christianity in his empire. This continued for two years. God then had pity on his people, as the prophet said after the captivity: *Do not fear, Jacob of Israel. I have heard your prayer in my name. If even your sins became like dust and your faults like clouds, when you cross the waters, I will be with you. The rivers will not drown you. If you go through fire, you will not burn. Neither fire nor death will approach you.*⁵⁷ Enemies came from all sides to combat these impious people. Diocletian went mad. He left his palace and began to roam the streets. Caius the son of Quirinus, whose father had been killed by Diocletian, came with his army to besiege him in his palace. He seized him and cut open his lower jaw, as one does with wild beasts, and attached a rope to his toes. He then pillaged the palace and demolished it. In this way God paid him back for what he had done. He died after a reign of 20 years at the age of 72.⁵⁸ When his son-in-law Maximian received the news in Cilicia, he too went mad and was killed by his companions.

[Story of Peter the Patriarch of Alexandria]

During the reign of Diocletian Peter succeeded Theonas. He was good and virtuous and never stopped praying to Christ to save the Church and his children from the rule of Diocletian. During his Patriarchate Arius appeared with his accursed doctrine and corrupted the hearts of men. Peter excommunicated him and he saw in a dream that he would never absolve him. Diocletian sent five spies to kill Peter in the eleventh year of his Patriarchate. When the faithful learned of this, they resolved to seize and remove them from their Patriarch. But he stopped them for fear of punishment. When the news reached Arius, who, being excommunicated, had no wish for the Patriarch to be killed, he gathered some men together and went to find the Patriarch in prison, asking for absolution. They prostrated themselves on the ground, but he did not answer them.

⁵⁷ An assortment of passages in Isaiah: 43,1ff., 1, 18 and 44,22.

⁵⁸ Diocletian may have committed suicide in 311, but there is no other evidence that this incident is anything but a fiction. On the subject of the persecution that started in 303 it is worth remembering what Lactantius, a fierce opponent of the persecutions, wrote about Diocletian in *de mortibus persecutorum* (11,8): 'since he was unable to resist his friends, co-Emperor or Apollo (whom he had consulted by oracle), he tried hold this moderation that he ordered the matter to be conducted without bloodshed (*quoniam nec amicis nec Caesari nec Apollini poterat reluctari, hanc moderationem tenere conatus est, ut eam rem sine sanguine transigi iuberet*). Caius son of Quirinus: as far as I can tell, there is no historical foundation for this person.

He said to them: 'Arius is excommunicated and separated in the his word and the world to come. He said to Achillas and Alexander , his two priests who administered the Church of Alexandria after him: 'I have learned in a vision that I am to be martyred and that you will succeed me on this throne. Do not think that I am without mercy and that I do not suffer for the sake of sinners, because I too am a sinner. But Arius is full of deceit and has not truly abandoned his belief. I do not want to compel him. But last night I saw in a dream a young man, about 20 years of age, coming in to me by the door. His face shone like the sun and the house was illuminated. He was wearing a cotton tunic split into two parts from the top of his chest to the bottom He had folded it over his chest that the latter might not be exposed. When I saw him in this state, I was distressed and said to him: 'Master, who tore your garment ?' He replied: 'Arius. Make sure that he does not follow you in the Church, for you will be responsible for him. Order your disciples who will administer the Church after you not to receive him, for you will be a martyr. I have warned you, and you know the suffering caused to some of the fathers by Meletius.⁵⁹ So keep the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you bishop.' After hearing his words, his two disciples and a gathering of the faithful departed. For fear of provoking trouble he sent word to the imperial legates to come and find him during the night. He asked for permission to go to the church and this was granted. He came in at night and prostrated himself on the tomb of St Mark and returned to them. His neck was struck. A woman ...⁶⁰ praying to God saw someone who said to her: 'Peter, the chief disciple, and Peter, Patriarch of Alexandria, the last of the martyrs to be killed by Diocletian.' And it happened that a group of people passed during the night and found him on the ground. They wrapped him in their garments, carried him into the church and buried him with the Patriarchs near the tomb of St Mark, the evangelist and apostle. At that time Marcellinus the Roman Pontiff was flogged twice and sent into exile. The same was done to Eusebius, his successor for five years. Marcellinus was Pontiff for 16 years.⁶¹

59 The bishop of Assiut who refused the receive those who had lapsed druing the persecution back into the Church. There is some speculation that Arius was ordained by Meletius.

60 According to a note in the critical apparatus there is an unintelligible word here.

61 In fact for eight years: 296-304 AD. Marcellus was Pope from 307 to 309 AD.

10. Story of Arius the heresiarch, the reason for his death and what happened to his companions

When Peter, bishop of Alexandria, was killed, Arius became bolder and proclaimed his teaching before Alexander the successor of Peter. He said that the Son was created before everything and added the words of Solomon: 'God created Him at the beginning of creation before all His other works.'⁶² He attributed these words to the Logos and altered the text of the Gospel that names the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because of the vocation of nations and their baptism. He preached to the Alexandrians not to say: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.' Alexander then assembled 120 bishops and excommunicated him with all who accepted his teaching. Among the bishops was Eusebius the archbishop of Caesarea, who made the reckoning in the Chronicon.⁶³ On his death Alexander was succeeded by Athanasius the Great, the beacon of the Church. He was continually oppressed and persecuted by Arius and his followers. Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa⁶⁴ and Origen⁶⁵ came together and asked Athanasius to remove Arius from his manacles, but he refused. They then wrote to the Emperor and said that Arius had abandoned his error. In fact Arius had conceived a deceitful scheme: he wrote the profession of his teaching on a piece of papyrus which he had concealed about his person and, holding his hands high in the air, swore an oath that he acknowledged the true faith. Eusebius and the others resolved to allow and receive him into the church. This was prevented by Athanasius. During the night he prayed to God to deliver him from Arius and his false teaching or to recall him to Himself and remove all traces of him from the Church. This was on the night before Sunday, the day of when Arius would be allowed into the church. God heard his prayer and listened to his request. Arius came early, for he hoped to be allowed into the church despite Athanasius. He had gone to the toilets, where his insides came out of his body and he died instantly. Some say that it happened on his way to the church: because he had a stomach disorder, he went looking for a cubicle, and after entering his insides came out with what he had drunk, and this killed him. May God have no mercy on him ! The friends of Arius fled in confusion and shame. The saint thanked God who had granted his request to deliver the Church from the

⁶² Eccl. 24, 14

⁶³ See section 21 below.

⁶⁴ Homs

⁶⁵ Chronologically impossible. Perhaps Gregory of Berytus.

wickedness of Arius.

Some said that the heretic had been a deacon at Alexandria in the time of Constantine. When Peter the Patriarch learned of his teaching, he excommunicated him. But Peter was martyred and succeeded by Alexander who released him and moreover ordained him priest. After some time Arius began to resent Alexander for his learning and knowledge. One day Alexander ordered him to preach the festal sermon. In his sermon Arius cited the words of Solomon, son of David: 'The Lord created me first of his creatures'⁶⁶, and some attendants wanted to know what this meant. He replied that the words referred to the Messiah, the Son, for he was created before all creatures. He repeated this in another sermon. He was then forbidden, like all the priests, to preach at Alexandria. When people asked him for his opinion, he said that, for him, Christ was a created servant and the Son began by creating the Holy Spirit. When the Patriarch of Alexandria learned of this, he gathered 100 bishops from Egypt and neighbouring countries and wrote to the the Patriarch of Constantinople to tell him what he had done. Arius the heretic wrote to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia,⁶⁷ to ask him for support because he knew that other bishops shared his opinions. Arius then left for Rome to see the Emperor and denounced the plot against him orchestrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria. He maintained that his teaching was true (supported elsewhere) by other bishops, such as Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, Theodore of Laodicaea, Paulinus of Tyre and Athanasius of Ainazarbe. The Emperor then summoned all the bishops to his presence. The stories concerning this wretch are too numerous and too long, and this is only a brief summary for this account. Those wishing more extensive information should consult the work of Socrates, who provides all the necessary details.⁶⁸ The commentator Theodore has also recorded the erroneous teaching of Arius at length in his book *The Precious Stones*.⁶⁹ We will also relate a few anecdotes about Arius and his faction because they continue to persecute those opposed to their irrational teaching. One of their machinations was directed at Eustathius. They suborned a pregnant woman to testify that Eustathius⁷⁰ was

⁶⁶ Eccl. 24,5

⁶⁷ He seems to have been an astute ecclesiastical politician who eventually persuaded Constantine that Arius' views were orthodox and acceptable. Died 341 AD

⁶⁸ *Historia Ecclesiastica* I

⁶⁹ A well-known work *On the Twelve Precious Stones* was composed by Epiphanius bishop of Salamis at the request of Diodore of Tarsus in about 394 AD. One of Diodore's students was Theodore of Mopsuestia.

⁷⁰ Became bishop of Antioch in 323 AD

the father of the child. She agreed to this and spread a malicious rumour and many friends and supporters of the accursed Arius were assembled when the harlot came forth and accused the bishop of having made her pregnant. The Patriarch asked her to produce witnesses. The bishop said nothing. The woman then said: 'You astonish me, Patriarch, by asking me of his acts with me.' Some of his attendants said: 'She is right, but she has to swear an oath that she is telling the truth in her accusations and that she has been induced or compelled.' She then swore that Eustathius had made her pregnant, but in fact it was a goldsmith called Eustathius who had done it. The saint was excommunicated, defrocked and removed from his see and his flock. A short time later, the woman was possessed by a demon, who tortured her continually, not that he was not determined to do himself, but because of the humble prayers of the saint before God. As the torture continued day and night, she began to understand that it was because of the lies she had told about Eustathius. She hastened to the Patriarch, who was with several of his friends and told him that supporters of Arius had made her do it and paid her. She added that the bishop was innocent and the man who had made her pregnant was a goldsmith called Eustathius.

Several of those present at the judgement of Eustathius, though bishops, believed secretly in Arius. But they maintained their show of hostility to him to keep their dignity, for they had bought their bishoprics. These impostors said to Constantine: 'Athanasius no longer wishes to obey you. He has not replied and ignores you.' The Emperor sent for him and he attended, accompanied by two priests, one called Timothy, a man of sound judgement. When he arrived, some of these impostors made an agreement with an attractive young woman, to whom they gave a large amount of money, to go before the Emperor and accuse Athanasius of having made her pregnant. When all were present before the Emperor, the woman entered, asking for help: 'The Patriarch Athanasius raped me and I am pregnant. He drove me away and refuses to recognize or help me.' Timothy said: 'Did I do this to you?' She replied: 'Yes, you enemy of God' and shook him, saying: 'This is the one who raped me, Athanasius here.' The Emperor and his attendants knew that this was a trick conceived by the impostors, supporters of Arius. These men were confounded, even though they were not ashamed.⁷¹

⁷¹ Jer. 6, 15

Another trick: Several bishops and others hid Arsenius their bishop. They found a dead man, cut his hand off and took it to the Emperor, claiming that Athanasius had killed Arsenius and that this was his hand. There was general uncertainty, some affirming it, others denying it. Timothy the priest of sound judgement went and, by means of largesse, eventually found Arsenius, who was supposed to have been killed. He had him brought to the Emperor's throne room, full of Patriarchs and bishops and said to them: 'Do you know bishop Arsenius ?' They replied that they did. Timothy then asked if it were possible that Arsenius had an extra hand. But still their wiles and stratagems did not cease, even to the point where they told the Emperor that Athanasius had forbidden the export of wheat from Egypt and that he had written telling the Egyptians that he would excommunicate them if they sent anything. The Emperor believed them, because in fact the provisions were late. He exiled Athanasius for six months.⁷² As he approached death the Emperor had a dream that frightened him. He became afraid and ordered Athanasius to be brought back to the city immediately. He wrote The saint returned to his Patriarchate. Before his enemies had claimed that the Emperor had not known what he was ordering because of his illness. But Julius the Roman Pontiff supported Athanasius and sent him back to Alexandria. When he died he was buried in the palace next to the Emperor. The saint returned after having appeared as one conversing with them. Constantine died in the thirtieth year of Shapur, the eight of the Persian Kings. On another occasion they asked the Emperor to allow the most foolish child to be presented to him and ask him for one of his churches. Athanasius did not agree. Constantine gave in to the impostors and allowed them every freedom to take action against him. They concealed themselves to kill him, as the Jews had one against Paul. When he learned of this, he boarded a boat and fled. Some of his enemies, having met him, did not recognize him, for God had hidden him from their vision. They said: 'Did you meet Athanasius on the way here ?' They replied that they had said that they would catch up with him if they continued. In this way he escaped from them. It is said of Athanasius that when he was young he would say to the children he was playing with: 'I am your bishop.' He nominated priests and deacons among the. Alexander, his predecessor, said to him: 'One day you will really be bishop', and he was.

⁷² 335 AD. Athanasius was exiled to Trier.

11. Story of Papnoute the monk⁷³

In the time of Diocletian, the Emperor before Constantine, there was a monk in the desert of Egypt called Papnoute. He was pious and worked miracles. Word of him reached Arianus the governor of the region to the effect that he was instructing Christians to disobey the Emperor and was contemptuous of the gods. The Emperor sent for him, and he knew that he was to endure martyrdom. When he arrived before the accursed Emperor, the latter had the instruments of torture brought and threatened him with them if he did not renounce Christianity and deny Christ. But he ignored the threats and was not afraid. He subjected the monk to torture and when he saw that Papnoute despised the suffering, he tied him to a stone and threw him into the water. He was not drowned but swam to the surface. People were amazed and their hearts were strengthened by what they had seen. When Arianus no longer knew what to do with him, he sent him to Diocletian, who ordered him to be crucified, and he remained on the cross for a long time, praying and chanting. May his prayers preserve the faithful.

12. Story of the martyrs Sergius and Bacchus

St Sergius was related to and a confidant of the accursed Maximian. St Bacchus was pure and was occupied in his house and estate. Both were in his service and both were Christian. They knew each other. Both fell out of favour with Maximian as Daniel had done with the king of Babylon. The Emperor came to the place of the high priests to make his offerings as usual. The two saints stayed behind. He sent for them, and they were praying somewhere. Maximian made them come to him and asked them about their beliefs. They told him, and he asked them to leave their faith to worship his gods because he had pity on them. They refused. He then had their garments torn from them and subjected them to all manner of

⁷³ The Greek form is Paphnutius and his name means 'the one of God'. It is a common name. There is an ascetic of the same name who lived at Denderah, site of the late Ptolemaic temple of Hathor in Upper Egypt with one of the earliest Christian churches made from the stones of the temple (5th cent. AD), who was martyred under Arianus. His feast day is the 20th Barmudah (mid-April). The Arabic form is Faqûtiûs, which is easily explained by the incorrect positioning of dots above and below the letter forms.

torture in the hope of converting them. But it had no effect, and they persevered in their resistance. Maximian cursed them and sent them to his agent in the land of the Euphrates, a relative of Sergius, and told him to kill them. The agent spoke to them and wanted to save them, but they would not yield. Bacchus was whipped until he died. Sergius submitted to torture, but then he was decapitated. Both were thrown to the wild beasts, but they would not go near the saints. The faithful took their bodies and buried them at Resafa⁷⁴ and built over their tomb a church, which is still there, on the banks of the Euphrates. May their prayers preserve us.

At the time of Diocletian Bahram son of Bahram called Shahanshah, was king of Persia. He was weak and given to illness. He was benevolent to Christians and ordered the churches demolished by his father because of the Manichaeans to be rebuilt. After four years on the throne he died childless. Narses son of Shapur succeeded him. He was old, wise and intelligent. Many of the things he did showed his intelligence. He became king in the ninth year of Diocletian. In year 5 of his reign he went against the Roman empire and Armenia but was defeated. During his reign Christians did not suffer. After a reign of nine years he died and was succeeded by his son Hormizd. He showed himself to be independent in government and did not listen to the Magi. He organized an expedition against Diocletian to avenge his father, but suffered losses. Christians did not suffer during his reign of seven years and a few days.

13. Story of St Sylvester, Pontiff of Rome

At that time Miltiades was Pontiff at Rome for three years. Sylvester, at the age of 40, was chosen to succeed him. He was good and pious. He converted many people, resisted the friends of Diocletian and tolerated persecution of them. He uncovered soothsaying practices among pagan priests and demonstrated their wicked behaviour. He convinced many Jews with his arguments. He predicted the death of Diocletian and what was to happen to him.

⁷⁴ In N. Syria. Also known as Sergiopolis (and Anastasiopolis). It is mentioned in Is. 37, 12.

14. Story of the dragon⁷⁵

In the reign of the impious Maxentius there was an enormous monster living near a hill. Every year, in May, conjurors and magicians assembled around it and offered it a young virgin. Most Romans became ill from the stench of its breath that rose up to them. They changed colour. The monster lived in a cave to which one went down 360 steps. The saint, seeing the residents, urged them to abandon their error. Many notable people promised to convert to Christianity if the saint could get rid of the monster. So he asked God for help and spent a month on the matter. In a dream he saw the two blessed apostles Peter and Paul, who said to him: 'Go to the door of the cave. Take the priests Theodore and Julius and three deacons with you and celebrate Mass. When the people are assembled, go down into the cave and do not be afraid. Take iron locks with you, for you will find large bronze doors with chains on them. Locks them and say: "Thus have Peter and Paul, the two apostles of Christ, ordered these doors to be closed until the appearance of Our Lord Christ in memory of salvation." Then take the keys and hide them in the earth.' Sylvester did what he was told to do. People were convinced that he would die of the stench until he re-appeared with the keys in his hand. All those present gave thanks to God and many were baptized. Some did not for fear of Maxentius. The saint told them how he would die and how Constantine would become Emperor. They listened to what he said. As God had rescued the Babylonians from the cult of the dragon by the prophet Daniel, so He rescued the Romans by the hands of Sylvester their Pontiff.

15. Story of the Emperor Constantine

The empire was divided among four Emperors: Diocletian, Maximian, Maxentius, son of

⁷⁵ Sea monster. Or, in astronomy, Draco. The story may be part of a more elaborate and historical story involving Sylvester, who is said to have cured Constantine of his leprosy and seems to have played a major part in the Church-State concordat (papal authority as the basis of imperial power), later inscribed in the fiction known as the 'Donation of Constantine'. Sylvester died on Dec. 31, and this is why some continental European countries use the name.

Maximian Hercules, and Constantius Chlorus.⁷⁶ Diocletian and Maximian had the East, Armenia, Egypt and Syria to Constantinople; Maxentius governed Rome alone and the neighbouring countries, Constantius ruled Constantinople, that is Byzantium. The residents of Egypt and Alexandria rebelled at that time. Diocletian sent an army against them, but it was routed. In the eleventh year Narses reigned in Persia for seven years. He was succeeded by Hormizd, who reigned for five years. In year 19 of Diocletian Christian churches were demolished and many were killed in the persecution lasting eight years. Peter was martyred, the Alexandrian Patriarch who had excommunicated Arius. In that year there was such a shortage of food that a measure of wheat cost 2,500 drachmas. When Diocletian and Maxentius, who followed Shapur in his attacks on Christians, were conquered and put to flight by enemies from the East and West. They went mad, lost everything and merged in with the people. They were succeeded by Severus and another Maximin. They persecuted Christians and had many put to death. After a year Severus was killed and Constantine the Great, son of Constantius, succeeded him. Constantius was humble and gentle. In the country of his origin, Gaul, Christians lived in peace. They were protected from the persecution that had reached those in other countries. His wife, Helena, who was from Nisibis, forbade him to do what Diocletian and Maximian had ordered and encouraged him to do good to people. She implored God ceaselessly to turn her husband from idolatry to Christianity. He reigned for twelve years, his son Constantine having begun his reign three years before his father died. He died aged 57 and Helena aged 90.

The entire Roman empire fell to Constantine in the year 616 of Alexander, that is 273 of the Ascension of Our Lord to heaven. He ...⁷⁷ the country of Gaul, in which he was with his father, for Nicomedia. He was married to the daughter of Diocletian, Maximiana. Maxentius at Rome and Maximian in Syria rebelled against him, persecuted Christians and destroyed churches. Maxentius disembowelled small boys and with the entrails had torn out tried to take the auguries with the help of his soothsayers. He appeared dangerous to Constantine, who was afraid of him because of the size of his army and wanted to engage him in battle.

⁷⁶ The English novelist Evelyn Waugh, in his novel *Helena*, has an imaginative account of how Chlorus came to be part of Constantius' name: it was given to him by Helena when they first spoke to each other on the morning after a banquet at which he had drunk too much, and Helena said that he looked 'green', a colour used in English to indicate illness.

⁷⁷ The meaning of the verb is not clear. One might expect 'left'

He was still unfamiliar with Christianity: his mother had concealed herself from him and revealed her faith. She prayed constantly to Our Lord to convert him. His thinking was: 'The god who gives me victory over this enemy and helps me against him will be my god.' At midday he raised his head and saw a column of light in the form of a cross bearing this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. It is said that all those with him saw the same thing. He knew that this sign could be only Christian and he embraced ...⁷⁸ the faith. Then again, while asleep, he saw in a dream the Lord, who said to him: 'Take the form of this emblem you saw today. Let the general of your army carry it before and you will conquer your enemy.' He then made a cross of gold, encrusted it with diamonds and placed it on his standard. He was victorious over his enemies, and Maxentius drowned. He had reigned for twelve years. Constantine returned from the war four years later, with the cross in his hand and built the new city that bears his name: Constantinople. Since then Romans have carried the cross before them in battle, in the hands of the leader.

There was another reason for Constantine's conversion: leprosy. This had appeared on his body, and the cure suggested by various impious people was to strangle children and bathe in their blood. He did this with several children ...⁷⁹ It caused a great tumult in the city and there was much weeping. When he heard of this, he was gripped by compassion and released the other captive children. In the night he saw two men, who said to him: 'If you wish to be cured of leprosy, summon bishop Sylvester, who is in hiding for fear of you. He will cure you,' The next day he sent for the bishop and, when he arrived, said to him: 'Who are the two Christian gods I saw in a dream last night ?' 'Those you saw during your sleep are not gods, but two mortals: Peter and Paul, disciples of Christ the Saviour of humanity.' The bishop had images of the church brought. And the Emperor admitted that these were the images he had seen in his dream. The bishop preached and showed him the truth of the Christian faith. Constantine was baptized by a bishop. He was cured immediately of leprosy, which fell from him like the scales of a fish. Not counting women and children 52,000 people were baptized. This happened in the eleventh year of his reign. The faith took root in his heart: he destroyed temples and built churches. His wife Maximiana was baptized and became a good Christian. Sylvester put a stop to the Roman practice of naming the days of the week after the names of the seven stars: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus,

⁷⁸ Two words missing

⁷⁹ Lacuna in the text

Saturn.⁸⁰ Maximin, having learned what had happened to Maxentius, submitted to Constantine, sent him fine gifts and asked for his pardon. He also had the churches and monasteries in his provinces opened. Soothsayers and pagan priests were condemned for their conduct ...⁸¹ He rebelled once again and persecuted Christians. Constantine sent Licinius his brother against him, and he cut his army to pieces, was victorious, killed him and his children, eradicated the soothsayers, built monasteries and churches, honoured the Christians and settled in Syria. Constantine also wrote to his friends to protect Christians, stop the evils inflicted on them by Kings and build churches. Constantine was not baptized in the year of his victory over Maximin Daia, the seventh year of his reign, but in the eleventh, building churches and embracing the true faith, because he wanted to be baptized in the Jordan, where Christ had been baptized. He wrote to Eusebius of Caesarea to order him to destroy pagan temples, extirpate them and build new churches on them. He sent large sums of money for this. Eusebius destroyed the old building and raised more stylish buildings and enlarged the churches, telling the Emperor of this. The Jews, when they saw, became very envious: 'It is the One God who cured the Emperor of his leprosy not Christ.' The Emperor was troubled and began to hesitate. He wanted to know the truth and assembled a dozen Jewish high priests and a dozen Christian bishops, who discussed the matter before him. He separated the truth of the proofs brought by the bishops from the weakness of the Jewish arguments. He became closely associated with Christianity and worked zealously for the triumph of the truth and the destruction of error.

16. The discovery of the Cross and the nails

Helena the mother of Constantine went to Jerusalem with a large retinue, magnificent riches, veils, precious cloths and elaborate ornaments of gold and silver for the altars. Once in Jerusalem she began a search for the Cross and the nails that had pierced the hands of the Saviour and, with the help of bishop Eusebius, found them. The impious Jews had concealed everything in a well, upon which they had piled the garbage of the city, so that over time it had become a large mountain. Helena paid people to remove the waste and

⁸⁰ It was also Sylvester who ordered the day of rest to be transferred from the Sabbath (Jewish) to the Lord's Day (Christian), according to the 9th cent. Abbot of Fulda, Rabanus Maurus *de clericorum institutione* (Patrologia Latina 107).

⁸¹ Lacuna

eventually the three crosses and the nails were found. To test the crosses she brought the into contact with a woman who had been long dead. She did not move when touched by the crosses of the thieves, but rose instantly when she came into contact with the Cross of Christ. The faithful Queen entrusted the Cross to the bishop and from the nails made a bit for her son's horse. God had inspired her to act in this way to fulfil a prophecy.⁸² Eusebius abandoned his heresy and anathematized Arius and his followers, burning all his books. Constantine wrote to all his provinces ordering all of Arius' books to be burned under pain of severe punishment.

17 Helena the faithful and her victorious son

Helena, the faithful and blessed Queen, was born in Edessa in Mesopotamia, in a village called Kafr Fahar.⁸³ She became a Christian thanks to Barsamya, 'the son of the Gospel', bishop of Edessa, where she had learned the holy books. A man named Valentinus, from a family of Roman Emperors, son of Caius, son of Dar Samis, son of Decius, son of the Emperor Claudius II, was sent by the Roman Emperor to inspect the Eastern part of the Empire. This included the home of this woman. When he saw her, he was pleased by her beauty and asked her parents for her hand in marriage. They agreed, and she went back to Rome with him. He became Emperor.⁸⁴ She worked hard to defend the interests of Christians in her husband's pagan empire. He obeyed her because he loved her and ignored her religion. She bore him a son whom he named Constantine and who grew up in the religion of his father. On the death of his father Constantine became Emperor. For about 270 years Christianity had been persecuted in Syria and other provinces, that is from year 15 of Tiberius to year 19 of Diocletian. Helena did not think it necessary to tell her son about her religion or try to convert him, afraid of his youth, the pernicious influence of his friends, lack of constancy after baptism, lack of faith.

In January of the seventh year of Constantine the barbarian armies came out against him and descended on the Danube to pillage the Romans and lay waste their country. Costa⁸⁵ says

⁸² Zach. 14,20

⁸³ Various traditions make her Bithynian, British and so on

⁸⁴ Constantius Chlorus

⁸⁵ Historian cited below.

that Constantine attacked Maxentius because the latter had rebelled against him at Rome, had refused to recognize him as Emperor and seized the city. Constantine therefore went against them with his army and camped near them, by the river, to attack them. But he knew that the enemy arm He learned that the enemy was prepared to attack in the morning. That night he had a dream of a bright radiant light in the sky and a cross made of stars with this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. Others say he had the vision in the day time. It was May 19th, the day of the appearance celebrated by the Greeks. Isho ' barnun the archbishop says in his Questions of the Deacon Macarius⁸⁶ that Constantine saw the cross near his tent, spread over it like a lance made up of different stars. At the tip of the lance was the form of a cross in distinct stars. The stars were in the form of letters. It is a custom among the Greeks and most nations to tie a band of cloth around their lances below the metal part, and this is why Nestorians attach a small veil instead a band to the staff that bears the cross. Others claim that this band at the base of the cross serves to represent what Our Lord did when girding himself with a cloth when he humbly washed the feet of the disciples.

Let us return to our account. Constantine was very afraid of this vision. He assembled his wise men and soothsayers, told them and asked what it meant and which Roman god it belonged to. None of them knew. He made cross of gold like the one he had seen and ordered it to be put on his standard. He fell upon the enemy, cut them to pieces, killed their king, and the rest took flight.

Costa son of Luke say that Constantine, after his victory, began to wonder who this god was who had helped him to defeat and rout his enemy. In thought, in the middle of the day, he looked up at the sky and saw the Cross, as bright as fire, with this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. Several others saw it at the same time and were astonished. The following night he had a dream in which some said to him: 'Make the form of this cross in gold, and with it you will conquer your enemies.'

Constantine entered Rome The Christians were moved and Eusebius the bishop of Rome

⁸⁶ The only work of the 9th cent. Nestorian Catholicos to have survived is the *Questions on the Pentateuch*.

hid. Constantine once again asked the pagan priests in the temples about the Cross. They were not sure. They reported that on the day when he had this vision many statues in the temples were destroyed. Constantine became afraid. The matter was talked of among the Christians of Rome, who sent to him in secret that the sign he had seen was the form of the Cross on which the Christ had been crucified. He thought about it, asked about it and learned. He liked the faith. After first reassuring Eusebius, he asked the bishop to come and explain Christianity to him. Eusebius agreed, and the Emperor was convinced and had himself baptized with his wife Maximiana, the daughter of Diocletian. Most of his friends were also baptized. It is said that Constantine's leprosy was also cured. Others say that when the Roman Christians heard of his arrival in they fled. The idolaters⁸⁷ came to him and said: 'If you wish to be cured of your leprosy, Emperor, cut the throats the children of the city and bathe in their blood.' The Emperor ordered this to be done. But when the children were seized, the city began to resonate with the tears and laments. The Emperor, seized with compassion, spared the children. In the night he had a dream in which he saw two men, who said to him: 'If you wish to be cured of leprosy, send for Eusebius bishop of Rome, for he is in hiding and has fled for fear of you.' The following day the king ordered Eusebius to be brought and said to him: 'Where are the two Christian gods I saw last night ?' The bishop replied that the two he had seen were not gods, but men: Peter and Paul, disciples of Christ, God of gods. Eusebius gave him an image of the two apostles, taken from the church. When the Emperor saw it, he cried out: 'Truly these are the ones I saw last night in my dream.' He was then baptized. The leprosy fell from his body, like the scales of a fish. Some say that the number of those baptized with the Emperor amounted to 12,000; others say that it was 52,000. According to some it was the Pontiff Sylvester who baptized the Emperor in year 11 of his reign, year 628 of Alexandria.

Constantine thereafter removed the Jews from his empire and the pagans from the offices of state. He weakened them and lowered their status after their scholars and the scholars of the Christians had discussed religious matters together. The defenders of the truth triumphed over the propagators of error. The Emperor applied himself to searching for the Cross. He charged his mother Helena with travelling to Jerusalem to take care of the matter. She

⁸⁷ This is a somewhat confusing term, but here I think it must mean 'idolaters' Hans Wehr *A dictionary of modern Arabic* p.210

arrived at the site on May 28, Year 631 of Alexander. Some say that it was Eusebius bishop of Jerusalem who went with her and not the bishop of Rome. When she arrived in Jerusalem, she called on Alexander the bishop. who had been transferred to Jerusalem because of his worth, piety and religious zeal. She told him about her quest and requested the presence notable Jewish teachers and scholars. They attended and were doubtful that they had been summoned because of the Cross. One of them, Judas the son of Simeon, said to them: 'My father told me the location of the Cross and how Jesus died because of the jealousy of the rabbis and high priests. He told me to reveal the place if anyone asked. His belief in Christ and his truthfulness made me determined to believe in Him too. He also told me that one of the disciples named Stephen, my father's uncle who was publicly stoned by the Jews for having believed in Him and called upon people to acknowledge Him. So if I am asked where the Cross is I will say.' The Jews replied. 'Do what you think is right.' Helena assembled them and asked about the Cross. They all replied that only Judas could help her. She then questioned him, but the demon, reminding him of the Judaism so deeply rooted in his soul, persuaded him to renounce his faith, and he denied any knowledge of the location of the Cross. Helena threatened to throw him down a well where he would die of hunger and thirst and thus forced him to reveal the place. He hastened to it and dug up the earth. A sweet fragrance issued forth, and three crosses were revealed. When questioned about the nails, he resumed his excavation and discovered four. To remove doubt Helena proceeded to verify the Cross. At that moment two men appeared with a shroud. Judas said: 'Now we will know which one is the Cross of Christ.' He said that as he proceeded to test it. He stepped forward and put two crosses on the dead, one after the other. There was no sign. Then he put the third on him and the dead one rose up. The voices resounded to praise and thank God for His grace. Helena covered the Cross with gold and encrusted it with precious stones. She made a gold case for it and left it in Jerusalem. Some say that she took with her to her son.

It is said that Chosroes, son of Hormizd, after conquering the city of Dara and leaving for Jerusalem, summoned the bishop of Jerusalem and questioned him about the Cross found there by Helena. The bishop replied that the Jews had seized it by force. Chosroes sent for their leaders and punished them, so they handed it over to him. He took it to Theodosius, son of the Emperor Maurice. It is said that Greeks, before leaving to fight, had this Cross in

their vanguard. When Chosroes Anushirwan⁸⁸ planned to attack the Greeks, the latter equipped a fleet and placed the Cross in the vessel with the treasure. A strong wind arose and blew the vessel from the Greek side to the sea of Khorasan.⁸⁹ The ship with the Cross was captured and taken to Chosroes, who took the Cross for a weapon of war and put it in his arsenal. Shirin, secretly a Christian, learned of this and asked for and received the Cross. When the Byzantine Emperor learned that the Cross had fallen into the hands of Chosroes, he agreed to many suggestions made by Chosroes and asked him for the return of the Cross. Chosroes agreed. Shirin was sad and broke off a piece to be blessed by it. It is said that this is the only part of the Cross that Eastern Christians still have. Shahdost,⁹⁰ bishop of Tehran, said of the Cross that Heraclius⁹¹ during the Persian wars took all of the royal treasures of Syria and sent them to Constantinople with the Cross that he had taken at Jerusalem. A strong wind blew the vessel off course to Alexandria. The Persians seized the vessel and took the contents and sent them to Seleucia-Ctesiphon with the Cross. Heraclius was very angry and set off to make war on the Persians. The Persian king lived at Daskarat al Malik on the road to Khorasan. As Heraclius approached, he took flight, came to Seleucia-Ctesiphon and crossed the bridge of Tamarra and Dayala.⁹² Heraclius camped on the bridge of Nahrawan. Chosroes then sent the Cross to him with a band of Christians to ask Heraclius to withdraw. At the sight of the Cross his anger subsided, and he acceded to the request of the Christians and made peace with Chosroes.

Costa son of Luke writes that Helena in Jerusalem found the Cross in two equal sections. She took a piece and sent it to her son and left the other at Apamea. Roman Emperors tried to seize it, the Apameans refused. They eventually agreed to give them half, one quarter remaining at Apamea. In the time of Justinian⁹³ the Persians made war on the Romans and destroyed the city of Apamea. They removed the quarter of the Cross and took it back to Ctesiphon. Heraclius asked Shahrbaraz⁹⁴ for the quarter and he sent it. Heraclius joined it to the other half and had it gilded. The wood is said to be fig. It is also said that when the Cross

88 The Persian means 'undiminishing soul'.

89 Caspian Sea.

90 'Friend of the King'. Primate of the Eastern Church from 341 to 343 AD, he was martyred under Shapur II

91 Became Emperor in 610 and pursued the series of wars between the Byzantine and Persian Empires until 628 AD. It was Heraclius who made Greek the official language of the Eastern Empire.

92 Two names for the same small river near Baghdad.

93 Emperor from 527 to 565 AD.

94 King 627-629 AD

arrived citizens cut off an arm of the Cross and replaced it with a golden arm. The wood of the Cross was known by a miraculous sign: it was immune to fire. The fragments of the Cross dispersed throughout the world come from this division. Nestorians celebrate the Cross on Sept. 13, the anniversary of the discovery of the three crosses. Melkites celebrate the 14th, the miracle by which a corpse was brought back to life. Some say that the discovery and the miraculous resurrection happened on the 13th and the 14th was the day when Helena placed it in the church at Jerusalem. She wanted to know what to do with the nails. God reminded her of the prophecy of Zachary,⁹⁵ saying that they were for the bit of the Emperor's horse, blessed of the Lord. And they were so made for use in important wars by Emperors.

Judas, who had pointed to the place of the Cross, sincerely believed and was baptized. Later, he was consecrated bishop of Jerusalem, after the death of Alexander, and was given the name Cyriacus. Helena made a vow that if her son became a Christian and protected Christians, she would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to pray and build churches on the places hallowed by the footsteps of Christ. She fulfilled her vow and her devoutness. One day Alexander said to her: 'Empress, I see you are much involved with building, while our religion is in agony because of the number of heretics who are corrupting so many of the faithful. Since no attempt has been made to exterminate this corruption and break up their meetings and refute their teachings, they are now strong and have destroyed buildings and caused the death of the faithful. The rest have accepted their error, voluntarily or as a result of force. It would make more sense for you to make this aspect of the religion your concern.' So Helena wrote to her son, told him what Alexander had said and asked him ...⁹⁶

18. Council of Nicaea

... no-one of this whole assembly. But the thought had already arrived at some and they were distinguished by it. Among them were chosen those whose virtues and the tortures they had

⁹⁵ Zach. 14, 20

⁹⁶ Lacuna.

suffered, still visible on their bodies, at the hands of the enemies put them in the first rank. The total number was 318: Patriarchs, Archbishops, bishops and priests. Some said that only these 318 were present at Nicaea. They included the bishop of Marash, who bore the wounds inflicted on him in prison, because the followers of Arius had seized him and tortured him for 22 years. They cut off his hands, feet, ears, nose and lips. They gouged out his eyes and ripped his teeth out. What remained of his body, in its dryness and blackness, looked like a branch of wood burned by fire. There was also Viton and Vincent, two priests representing the bishop of Rome; Alexander bishop of Alexandria, Macarius bishop of Jerusalem, Germanus of Samaria, Eusebius of Damascus, Anatolius of Emesa, Eustathius of Antioch, Zenobius of Seleucia, Jacob of Nisbis, who was of great standing and who is said to have brought someone back to life on that day in the Council. St Ephrem was also present, as was Theodore of Tarsus (not the commentator).⁹⁷ Among those not present, who had been summoned by the bishop of Rome, was Papas the Patriarch because of his great age and immobility. He was represented by Simeon bar Sabbae and Mar Shahdost. Some said he was represented by Simeon and Jacob bishop of Nisibis. It is said that Jacob was accompanied by the learned Ephrem, who had not been invited, to refute Arius. Isho' barnun the archbishop reports that Eustathius of Antioch was president of the Council ...

Constantine arranged a large hall for them and had the appropriate number of seats installed. They sat according to their rank. Constantine went to them and, starting with the bishop of Marash, kissed the ground before them as well as the places where his limbs had been mutilated. He did the same for all the others. He then sat down on a seat below theirs and encouraged them to examine matters of religion and the faithful, to demonstrate the truth and define articles of faith to be held in accordance with what was received from the apostles. He said this submissively and calmly. He then took his sword, his sceptre and his ring and placed them at their feet, saying: 'God has given you the power over the priesthood and me the power over the empire. But today God has given you both. I submit to you and I will follow your orders. Judge according to the truth in accordance with the order of God and the will of His Christ. You are the reason for life and living and the reason for the perdition of those who are lost, and that for ever. Look also among those who are dissidents,

⁹⁷ Presumably Diodorus of Tarsus. The commentator referred to is probably Theodore of Mopsuestia, a pupil of Diodorus and controversial theologian.

known as heretics, if there are not some who would have warped the divine books, adding to and taking away from them. Bring them here and debate with them to open their eyes. Perhaps they will return sincerely to the truth and those who support it. As for those who are clearly enemies of the truth, who would have warped the Scriptures and changed the faith, avoid them and keep them away from your discussions, except for those who retreat from their error and give reassuring signs of their true repentance and sincere conversion.'⁹⁸ The assembly heard these words and promised him and blessed him for his obvious good intentions, the strength of his faith and the sincerity of his concern. They deliberated that day, June 9 in the Year of Alexander 635, Year 21 of Constantine.

From this day the members of the assembly went into conclave to discuss, converse, exchange views and adduce clear and solid proofs until they were in full agreement on the contents of the Gospel, Apostolic tradition and the letter of the above-mentioned Alexander.⁹⁹ They put everything in writing and called it the Creed. It is said that the Council lasted for three years. The Creed was read out in their assembly before Mass. They all pronounced the anathema of Arius. The Emperor wrote a circular letter to all the bishops and heads of the Church to let them know of the anathema against Arius and that his books were to be burned. This is the text of the letter: *From Constantine the Emperor to all those who are to receive the letter, bishops, Archbishops, priests, officials and to all our subjects. Greeting. Arius the impostor, like the wicked devil, has violated the faith, estranged himself from the faithful and invented an unbelievable heresy. This is why he has brought upon himself frightful misfortunes and calamities. All his books and writings and opinions therefore are to be burned and disappear without trace. Anyone who has kept, in his dwelling or in his possession, any writing of Arius will be subject to civil and religious penalties. Let no-one give a reason (for these penalties to be inflicted) upon himself. Greeting.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The text of a speech delivered by Constantine to the Council at the beginning is given J.D. Mansi *Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio* vol. 2: Years 305 to 346 (1759) col. 661. The final sentence expresses sentiments that echo those expressed at the beginning: *sic enim estis et Deo omnium gubernatori rem gratam facturi et mihi vestro conservo maximum praestaturi beneficium* (For you will thus be doing something pleasing to God governor of everything and performing a great favour to me your fellow servant). I have no access to Schwartz.

⁹⁹ To Alexander of Byzantium. The text can be found in cols. 641-660.

¹⁰⁰ There is no letter in Mansi, but there is the text of a speech, in which the name of Arius does not occur.

Some report that the fathers of the Council, when counting their names, found 317 and, when counting the people, found 318. They understood that Our Lord (how great His name is) was among them, as He had said: 'If two or three gather in my name, I will be among them.'¹⁰¹ Shahdost, bishop of Tehran, said that the hymn sung on Christmas Eve (lailda tamiha)¹⁰² was composed by one of the fathers at the Council. The bishops went home after defining the the most important teachings. There are twenty canons on which Nestorians, Melkites and Jacobites agree. They were written by those acceptable to Melkites and Jacobites. These count 73 canons, originating from the copy of Maruta, bishop of Maifraqin. It is said that the Council fathers asked Eusebius bishop of Caesarea to draw up a calendar for the holy days, Lent and Easter, he being skilled at mathematics. They said to him: 'We have defined the teachings. It is now up to you to make Christians agree on the holy days.' He agreed and went off to an island, where he spent three years asking God to inspire him to complete the task known as the Chronicon. May God make us share in the merits of their prayers for all.

19. Description of Constantinople

Constantine ordered the Jews to be driven from all his provinces. He wanted to build a city: he looked for a suitable place at the heart of his empire. He asked men who were learned and men who were practical. He found no place more suitable than Byzantium, a city built by Byzus¹⁰³ in the time of Osiah and Joatham, kings of Israel. He built it and named it. It was built on seven hills, between the hills a tongue that came out from the great sea. It was surrounded by an impregnable rampart from one side of the sea to another. Byzus had made it ten miles long. Constantine added another two miles. He built it, embellished it and provided it with ornaments. It became the imperial residence. He brought in traders, for it is the middle of the Byzantine Empire and near Persia. At the gates of the city he built one graveyard for Emperors, one for Patriarchs and hippodromes for games. At the entrance to it he put an equestrian statue of bronze, the rider wearing a gold crown. He brought to it the

¹⁰¹Matt 18,20

¹⁰² The first word seems to be connected to 'birth', and the second may be associated with 'wondrous'

¹⁰³According to legend the name of the leader of the Megaran colonists who settled there in the 7th cent BC.

treasures of the kings, the relics of martyrs and the Cross. On each bank he built two large towers, on which he put iron siege engines like those used by Emperors in war. He bound them together with an iron chain to surround the place, serve as ramparts and deny enemy ships access to the city. They were also meant to serve as ramparts for his own ships because it was impossible to build walls here because of the depth of the water on three sides around the city, the west side being on land. The ramparts went from water to water. There were many churches and monasteries. He brought the relics of Joseph son of Jacob, the chair of John the Evangelist. He also consecrated two churches to the Virgin, one of which was the Anastasia and the St Sophia.

The walls of the latter were covered in sandal wood, the altar plated with gold and encrusted with jewels. He built squares in the city. One of his successors made golden gates for the west side of the city. All of this has been taken from a book found at Beit Abé, according to Mar Abâ the Patriarch (God bless his soul). He had seen these things when he visited the city.¹⁰⁴

Licinius, who had established himself in Syria, rebelled against Constantine, for he had become jealous of him. Constantine was patient and felt sorry for him because of his sister.¹⁰⁵ But Licinius did not change: he destroyed the churches of Antioch and put Christians into prison. Constantine did not tolerate this and preferred the safety of the Christians to the love of his sister. He turned against him, defeated him and took him alive. He tried to convert him. When he learned of the treachery of Licinius, he killed him. He increased his kindness to his sister to help her forget and ordered his nephews to give her anything she wanted.

20. Description of Central Rome

An eye-witness account of Mar Jacob the Metropolitan of Nisibis

He said: It is square, 28 miles long by 28 miles wide. Three quarters of it is on the coast, one quarter on land. It has twenty bronze gates covered with gold. It is surrounded by two

¹⁰⁴ 525 to 533 AD

¹⁰⁵ They were brothers-in-law.

ramparts, with walls 16 cubits thick and 70 cubits high. A river called Constantia separates the ramparts, crosses the city, bearing talsimat,¹⁰⁶ drums of bronze each 46 cubits in circumference. There are 10,000 drums. When an enemy attacks, the drums beat themselves, making a much louder noise than ordinary drums. The Emperor hears this from his palace, though they are 15 miles away. The river is 93 cubits deep and 150 wide. The city has 1,000 markets for Easterners and Westerners. Three of the markets are laid out with white marble columns, each one 100 cubits round and 30 cubits high. The columns support white marble aqueducts for the sea waters, along which the merchants ships pass, coming to the markets from all over the world. There 1,270 baths. Each Saturday at 3 pm the shops are closed and business is suspended. People flock to the churches in the evening and on Sunday for to hear petitions. It is 120 *jarib*¹⁰⁷ wide, and the walls and ceilings are gilded. It has 72 double doors of gold, 600 doors of bronze, copper and iron. Rome also has the Church of SS Peter and Paul: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and high. There are so many wonders to relate about this city that they cannot be told here.

21. Chronicon: History of its Composition

When the 318 fathers assembled to define the faith and establish teachings on which they could agree and notify the rest of the Christian world, they turned their attention to the variations in the information which the Jews gave to the Christians to celebrate their festivals: Lent and Easter. The fathers asked Eusebius of Caesarea to draw up a calendar which would let them know these dates. He went off alone to an island for three years. The fathers continued to pray that he would receive true inspiration from Jesus Christ. Fasting every day, using his intelligence and praying every night, he asked God to enlighten him. God heard their prayers. He inspired Eusebius with all the necessary knowledge. Eusebius returned and handed over his Chronicon, which is still used by Christians, who will never again need Jews, astrologers or mathematicians.

¹⁰⁶ It bears a striking to the word from 'talisman' is derived.

¹⁰⁷ The only meaning I know for this is a term to measure a plot of land. Measuring systems tended to vary according to place, as they did in Europe before the advent of standardization.

22. Easter and the Resurrection

After this there was a discussion between the bishop of Asia and Victor bishop of Rome. All the bishops thought that Easter should be on the 14th of the lunar month, whatever day it was. Victor said that they should celebrate the end of Lent and Easter on a Sunday, for this was the day when God began the creation of the world, when Our Lord came back to life, when the Resurrection will happen, when Christ will re-appear at His Second Coming. Polycarp¹⁰⁸ the Patriarch wrote to them that he had received the teaching of the two luminaries buried in Asia, John the Evangelist and Philip. The bishops of Jerusalem did not celebrate Easter according to this rule, but they adopted it for the future.

It is said that one of the bishops of Jerusalem changed water into oil, when he was celebrating this feast. Water was poured into the lamps because the oil was taking so long to arrive and the time for prayer had arrived and the faithful were gathered. The bishop told the deacons to light the lamps, and they burned throughout the entire office without going out.

23. Story of Shapur, son of Hormizd, known as Dhu'l Aktaf¹⁰⁹

On his death Hormizd left no male child. But his wife was pregnant. The Magi put the diadem on the belly of his wife without knowing what the child would be. She gave birth to a boy called Shapur. He was named king in the fifth year of Constantine. The doctors of the Church state this and add that Shapur began his reign when he was 15. He was proud and courageous. He worshipped the stars, in which he had great confidence. He hated Christians but was unable to harm them because of Constantine. In the 10th year of his reign he imitated his predecessors and began to build cities. He built one at Susiane, fortified it and called it ...¹¹⁰ which is Karkha of Ladhan. He settled Byzantine prisoners of war there. It is now in ruins. The inhabitants were taken to Susa. When Constantine died, he no longer concealed his evil disposition. In year 31 of his reign, while the children of Constantine

¹⁰⁸ There is a question mark after this name. I cannot identify him.

¹⁰⁹ 'He of the shoulders'

¹¹⁰ Lacuna

were still young, he attacked Christians, destroyed Churches and turned towards Nisbis. But he came back defeated and disappointed. God saved the people of Nisibis because of the prayers of Jacob their bishop and the blessed priest who succeeded him and the virtuous Ephrem. God instigated an Emperor against Shapur who was even more cruel: Julian¹¹¹, the Emperor who put him to flight and destroyed many Persian towns. When Julian died, he was succeeded by Jovian. ¹¹²Shapur stopped his persecution and allowed Christians to build churches. After the death of Jovian Shapur started again. Maruta bishop of Mafrekat and Akhi the Patriarch wrote a martyrology of those suffered martyrdom at the time of Shapur. Daniel son of Mary did the same in his ecclesiastical history.¹¹³ The pagan priests had said to Shapur, representing their god, that if he eradicated the Christians he would not die. The madman believed this and continued to search for and murder Christians.

On the death of Constantine his empire was divided between his children. He died at the age of 65, having reigned for 33 years.

24. Death of the Emperor Constantine (may God bless his soul)

When the death of Constantine was near, Eusebius the Roman Pontiff assembled 40 bishops and said to them: 'The pious Constantine will soon leave this earth, and his successor Julian, who is corrupt, will reign after him. Let us go to see Constantine to receive his blessing and his will.' When they arrived they found him in pain and began to weep: 'Woe to us, Constantine, when you are no longer here we will be dispersed. Woe to us, when we Christians are enfeebled in our torments, lapsing into paganism and the works of the devil.' Constantine understood what the bishops were saying. He gave him the strength to open his eyes and say: 'Help me to sit.' He stretched forth his hand and, taking their hands, he kissed them. 'You have nourished me, like a child, on the milk of the Scriptures. It is not necessary to fear the one who kills the body but the one who kills the soul and the body.'¹¹⁴ Watch over the flock of which you are the shepherds. You are accountable for them. Fear the day of resurrection and do not bow before the diadem of the king, his anger, his sword or his

¹¹¹ 361-363

¹¹² 363-364

¹¹³ No longer extant

¹¹⁴ Matt. 10, 28

punishment. This wolf will be short-lived and will move on to die in another country. As for you, you will be happy forever, for your suffering is for Christ. Pontiff, you will endure three struggles against him, and you will be victorious in all of them, with the help of Christ. I do not know what will become of me in the next life.' The Pontiff replied: 'Do not worry. Your faith and baptism will provide you with entry into the kingdom of heaven.' Constantine then ordered something to eat, and they ate. On Sunday morning, when Christians do not eat meat before the fast, Eusebius urged people to be steadfast in the midst of the general corruption and desolation assailing the Church. He ordered people to refrain from meat in that week and a period of mourning for the deceased Emperor. This was observed in all churches in the East and the West until an arrow from heaven struck the wretched Julian,¹¹⁵ who was succeeded by his general Jovian, and the imperial crown was seen descending from heaven. The misfortunes of the Christians had come to an end. Eastern Christians stopped observing this usage, but Western Christians continued to do so. Constantine told the Pontiff and the bishops to bury his body with the remains of his parents and to return home. Julian would be reassured to learn of this and begin his reign at Rome. A member of the assembly at Edessa asked him to bless the people of his city before he died. Constantine wanted to know if he should bless a city that had been blessed by God. He was told that the blessing of God was a rampart of Edessa but that Constantine's blessing would be the supporting wall of that rampart. He made vows to the people of Edessa and made his soul holy. On the third day after the burial with his parents the fathers went home. Julian sprang like a cruel lion, as Constantine had prophesied. In fact, he surpassed the prophecy with his behaviour. May the wrath of God and his damnation and the punishment he deserves fall upon him. We will tell his story elsewhere at another times, God willing.

It is said that Constantine died at Nicomedia, aged 65, on the day of Pentecost. His body was taken to Constantinople, the city which he had founded in year 31 of his reign. It is also said that his son Constantius transferred it to Constantinople. His feast day is May 22. Helena his mother died after him, aged 90. She was buried in the Church of the Apostles

115 His dying words, according to Theodoret *HE* 3,25, were: *νενίκηκάς με, Γαλιλαῖε* 'You have defeated me, Galilean.' His death came at a crucial point for both pagans and Christians, and not surprisingly perhaps became the stuff of legend cf. Norman H. Baynes 'The death of Julian the Apostate in a Christian legend' *Journal of Roman Studies* 27 (1937): 22-29. He died of a spear wound. The introduction of this episode in a passage that is said to be about the death of Constantine is clearly intended to be a prophecy.

built by her son.

25 Some of the distinguished and the holy in the days of Papas

They include Athanasius bishop of Alexandria, Eusebius bishop of Emesa, Miles al Razi bishop of Susa, Macarius the Egyptian monk, Mar Eugenius Abbot of Izala, Aphraate the Persian doctore, Sergius and Bacchus, the martyrs executed by Maximin, whose story has been told. David bishop of Bassora, having left his his see, departed for India. He preached Christianity to the inhabitants of this country and converted many. Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Pontus and disciple of Origen the wise, lived at the time of Severus the Roman Emperor. bishop Alexander, when he saw Gregory playing with children who had made him bishop, predicted that he would become bishop. Gregory fought against the Arian heresy and, for that reason, was exiled with Eustathius bishop of Antioch. After his recall from exile, his enemies accused him of fornication, but God confounded them with the statement made by a priest named Timothy, who revealed ...¹¹⁶ their depravity and falsehood. This holy Father died in his see.

26. Story of the Ephrem the Scholar

His father was from Nisibis and his mother from Amid. Ephrem became a Christian, was baptized and until he was eighteen lived in a town called 'Arbiya. He went to Nisibis where he was ordained deacon by Jacob the bishop. From there he left for Amid, where he stayed for some time. He then went to Edessa. Among the wonderful stories told is the following: 'When I came to Edessa, I stopped on the banks of the river Daisan, which surrounds the city. There I saw women washing their clothes. One of them looked at me in an unsuitable way. I rebuked her and told her to look at the ground and not at me. She replied instantly that it was I who should look at the earth because I had been created from it and that she should look at me because she had been created from my side. I marvelled at her response and realized that the city had many such educated and intelligent people'. St Ephrem

¹¹⁶ Apparently something missing in the text after the verb 'and he revealed' (وابان). The translator speculates, without great conviction, that 'there may be nothing missing and that in fact Wâbân is the name of the priest who defended Athanasius.

remained for some time in the mountain of Edessa, where he taught many. He then left for Egypt where he spent eight years opposing Arianism. From there he went to Caesarea where he met Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea. He asked Basil to pray to Christ that He may grant him a knowledge of Greek, and this was granted. St Ephrem continued his journey to Edessa. He opposed the teaching of Arius, Bardaisan and other heretics. He wrote much and when he died he was buried at Edessa. The Melkites commemorate him on February 1st. The Nestorians are among those who commemorate him during the week devoted to the Syrian fathers. May God remember us, thanks to their prayers. Among the students of Ephrem were the deacons Zenobius, Abâ, Isaac, Asaria, and Julian Saba. It is told in certain histories that Julian was the teacher of Ephrem. According to Costa, son of Luke, Julian died at Mt Sinai. Among his well-known works are the Commentary on the Old Testament, Commentary on the Psalms, Commentary on the Diatessaron, a Greek word meaning 'quadruple', a mixture of the four composed by Tatian. In explaining this book Ephrem wanted to avoid repeating the chapters, and this had also been Tatian's intention. Ephrem wrote twenty-two poems¹¹⁷ following the order of the Greek alphabet. Several books contain anti-heretical poems. Some are for holy days and the dead, martyrs, supplication and all those recited in church. He composed a Mass still used by the Melkites. The Nestorians also celebrated this Mass at Nisibis during the time of Jesyuab,¹¹⁸ who chose three Masses and banned the rest.

27. Story of Mar Simeon bar Sabbae the Martyr and Ninth Catholicos

This holy Father was from Susa. Some say that he was from Seleucia-Ctesiphon. His parents were royal dyers. He was chosen that the sign of Christ might appear in him. He was the archdeacon of Papas the Catholicos and he administered his affairs until his right hand became paralysed. It is said that there was a dispute between Papas and his bishops and the latter took Simeon by force and made him Catholicos while he was still an archdeacon. Papas then said to Simeon: 'Christ will not forgive your consent to what has been done unless you shed your blood and become a martyr. The Byzantines later wrote to Papas and asked the Catholicos to forgive Simeon, saying that he was innocent. Papas accepted this

¹¹⁷ Long poems (memra) and short poems (madroshe).

¹¹⁸ Jesyuab II bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon from 651 to 660.

and decided that one day Simeon would be Catholicos, and he was elected to the position by the fathers when Papas died.

But Satan, the enemy of merciful God, became envious of the peace and tranquillity of the Church. He decided to incite Shapur to persecute Simeon, as he had incited Nero to persecute Simon Peter, and stir up the Persians against him as he had done against others. On the death of Constantine, in year 31 of the reign of Shapur - Constantine had reigned for 33 years, honouring and glorifying the faith and smashing idols - the Persian monarch made his preparations and attacked Nisibis. Constantine the Younger¹¹⁹ resisted and was victorious, thanks to the prayers of Jacob bishop of Nisibis. God sent down upon him a black cloud and stones from on high. Shapur withdrew, defeated and in shame. Like the viper he was he spat out his poison against the fathers and the faithful in his kingdom.

Shapur liked Simeon, but the Jews, friends of Satan, knowing his hostility to Christians, made false claims that Simeon had converted the Magi to Christianity and, more seriously, had converted and baptized the king's mother, whose father was a Jew. Christ left his flock in the hands of the enemy, not out of weakness or loss, but to arouse them from the negligence and relaxation that leads to evil.

God (how great He is) spread Simeon's fame and made known his sweetness and charity to the poor, to whom he gave the fortune left to him by his parents. Nuns were in the habit of keeping men company at night when they prayed, but Simeon put an end to this. He required deacons and priests to discharge all their obligations and ruled on other Church matters.

It was then that the wretched Shapur, the hairless wolf, began his work, as the youngest of the prophets Daniel said when he compared the Persian king to a ravenous lion. Ezekiel compared him to the eagle and every violent creature. This prophecy has also been applied to Nebuchadnezzar by all the wise men. It was fulfilled in Shapur, who was said to be of his race and descent. For this reason he did not stop shedding the blood of the faithful. God

119 Constantine the Younger reigned from 337 to 340 and it is likely that Constantius (337-361) is meant.

want to test men and root their faith in the Lord. He ignored His pact with them and removed the angels charged with protecting them. The sufferings of the Christians lasted for forty years. Shapur was like a hard-hearted butcher who starts with the fattest sheep and eventually kills the entire flock. Thus, he started with the notables and priests, but spared nobody. He made them die in different ways, some in prison and poverty, some of hunger and thirst, some by blows, some on the cross, others by the sword. This wretched king ordered pregnant women to be cut open so that he could see the baby removed, cut in two and crucified with its mother. He denied burial to those killed. They were to be crucified to bake in the sun and be eaten by birds. Thus the prophecy made for the Maccabee family when they were killed by Antiochus was fulfilled¹²⁰: *He gave their bodies to the eagles of the sky to eat and the flesh of the just to the lions of the earth*

Around Nisbis the Christian persecutions lasted for six years. The wretch swore by the sun, his god, and by the fire, his creator, to shed the blood of Christians until they adored his gods or were wiped out. He sent out orders accordingly throughout his empire. The friends of Satan said to him: 'The king's orders against Christians will be useless as long Simeon encourages them and helps with his money and resources, as long as he commands them not to obey the king and promises the delights of the next life.' When Shapur heard Simeon's name, he ordered him to be brought before him. Simeon was in a gathering of hundred members of the clergy when he was seized. Gushtazad and his two sons, who were monks, were also seized.

When Simeon arrived before the king, he was ordered to impose a poll tax on monks, double the tax paid by Christians and bring contributions for the swamps of the country ...¹²¹ Simeon replied: I did not receive my appointment in the Church to tell people what to do but to watch over the Church, tend the flock and keep them from wolves.' This took place in year 650 of Alexander and 290 after the Ascension and 117 of the Persian Kingdom. The same demand was sent to Simeon. He repeated his earlier reply and said that he had no money and that, besides, he was bound to distribute what he had, because the rules of his faith told him to do so. He was very gracious and prayed for the king, who ordered him to

¹²⁰ Ps. 79, 2 cf, also I Macc. 7, 16-17.

¹²¹ Lacuna The history of this passage is suspect. Simeon was martyred in 341.

be brought to the palace gate with his companions, 130 in total. Simeon appeared among them like the moon among the stars. When he reached the gate, the porter said: 'Who are you to resist the king and refuse to obey him ?' Simeon replied: 'I am not, despite my rustic exterior,¹²² one who looks after the horses and tackle of the king. But what he orders me to do is against the law of God.' He then had him chained and brought before the king. This happened at Karkha Ladhan. The king subjected Christians to all sorts of torture. But the Catholicos gave them strength and reminded them of the suffering of Jesus and strengthened their faith and their soul.

Gushtazad was brought before the king. He confessed his Christianity, but after several interviews he denied it and worshipped the sun and fire. Simeon grieved when he learned of this. Gushtazad repented when he realized his error. He sent to ask for forgiveness from Simeon, who said: 'Your sin will be forgiven only if you confess your faith in Him on the spot where you rejected Him.'

Discussions between Simeon and Shapur lasted until the latter asked the former to worship the sun and fire. Their discussion continued without a break. The saint used no insulting or wounding words. The king finally ordered his execution and that of his companions.

Gushtazad ran to him and shouted out his Christianity, begging the king to let it be known that he had not been condemned to death for a crime but for loyalty to his faith. He was beheaded like the others. Simeon asked to be the last and this was granted to him. While they were being taken to their death in groups of ten, he would give them courage:

'Remember the words of Christ: *Do not fear those who kill the body because they cannot kill the soul* and *The one who loves his soul will lose it for my sake and the one who loses it will save it.*¹²³ He blessed them and wiped their faces, saying: 'Christ, Lord of the

Universe, receive this agreeable victim who is sacrificed for your sake. May his blood be a sacrifice for mankind.' The assembly replied: 'Amen.' They underwent martyrdom. None turned his neck away or trembled at the sight of what was awaiting him. Simeon then began to chant the hymn sung on the first Sunday after East: *Be firm and cast off your outer*

¹²² This reading is not certain, but I think Simeon is politely telling the gatekeeper that, despite his appearance, he is not a person to be trifled with.

¹²³ Matth. 10, 28 and 39

*garments ...*¹²⁴ The faithful, present but concealed because of the infidels, retained this hymn and wrote it down, and they are the source of it. He received it while the tears flowed down his white beard and his children were being slaughtered like sheep. He continued to preach to them, saying that though they were leaving their outer garments, their bodies, they were not leaving their inner jewels, baptism and faith. He kept saying: 'How brilliant these crowns are ...'¹²⁵ They do not differ from each other but are all of the same kind.'

The last two were Simeon and aged priest called Ananias. Simeon saw that he was trembling. He hastened to him: 'Do not be afraid, my brother. Close your eyes while the surgeon's knife passes over. He was beheaded like the others. The saint was then led away to be executed, crying out 'I bless God Who has shown me the crowns of my brothers and I thank God Who has not let me lose any of my children. I pray for all men and the earth that has drunk the blood of the martyrs.' Also: 'Lord God, make this earth a place of mercy and this mud a medicine for the cure of illnesses.' At the end of his prayer a terrifying voice was heard saying: 'Amen.' The hearts of the those in attendance were troubled and their spirits deadened. They hastened to behead him. This took place on a Friday, the day of the Crucifixion at the ninth hour of the day. During the night young prisoners of Karkha of Ladhan came to take the bodies of those they knew and buried them. They were on their guard because they feared the persecutions of their enemies. A great wind came and deposited dust on the spot where the saint and his companions had been killed to form a high hill. Simeon was Catholicos for eighteen years. Some say that it happened on the 13th or 14th of April. He is commemorated on the first Friday of the month, the day known as the Small Branches.

The first Friday after the Resurrection is called Commemoration of the Confessors because Shapur, after executing Simeon and his companions, proclaimed that those who wished to remain Christian should do in secret and those who were open about their religion would be put to death. Christians began to rush to the doors of Shapur to confess and obtain the crown of martyrdom. They came spontaneously, men, women and children, When Shapur saw the crowd of those prepared to die, he ordered them not to be killed, not out of pity, but because

¹²⁴ This seems to be what the Syriac text says.

¹²⁵ Lacuna

he wanted to deny them the magnificent reward they sought. People went about their business, and a general Commemoration of Confessors was appointed for them, in which all were associated because they had been willing to die.

The people then came to find the bishop of Ladhan and asked him for parts of the martyrs' bodies to keep in their churches as a blessing. He gave them parts of the blood-soaked garments, which wrought great miracles and performed acts of healing.

We have given here only a short summary of the story of our father the holy martyr because it is very long. We have said nothing of the faithful of Deir al Ahmar and Beit Garmai, Ninive, Maraj and many other cities, where 60,000 Christians were killed. About 30,000 were killed in Iraq. The Church was without a head for a long time. It is said that on Maundy Thursday, the eve of his death in prison, Simeon said Mass. The back of one of the priests also imprisoned with him served as an altar. On his right was the patena and the left the chalice. He sang the hymn of the Mass: *By the eyes of the Spirit*. Since that day this hymn has been sung on Maundy Thursday.

28. In the Days of Simeon the Catholicos

At the time of Simeon Constantine divided his empire among his three sons: the eldest Constantine, the second Constantius, the third Constans. Each was a Caesar. The name of Caesar began with Marcianus Caius, who brought the kingdom of Macedonia to Rome.¹²⁶ The Romans relate that the mother of Julius Caesar died before giving birth, and her son was removed from the womb by cutting it open, and this is why he is called Caesar. The name has remained with Roman Emperors.

At the death of Constantine the Great his son Constantine reigned alone over the West. He had made his home during the lifetime of his father, while he was with him at Constantinople. Constantius took the East, with Antioch as his residence. Constans reigned

¹²⁶ Macedonia became part of the Roman Empire in 146 BC as the result of a victory Quintus Metellus over the last Macedonian king.

over the high countries of the Romans.¹²⁷ Three years after the death of his father Constantius attacked his older brother, killed and took his part of the empire. Shapur took the opportunity to invade the Eastern provinces and took prisoners because there was division there. Magnentius attacked Constans and killed him after he had been Emperor for five years. He was a devout believer, like his older brother. The whole empire reverted to Constantius, who attacked Magnentius, putting him to flight. Pursued by Constantius, Magnentius killed his brother, his mother and finally himself. Rid of him, Constantius became sole Emperor. He built several cities in the West and Tell Mazwan in the East, to which he gave his name. He assembled 140 bishops at Seleucia in Syria and exiled anyone opposed to the faith of the 318. He exiled Eunomius bishop of Cyzicus, who had broken with the Arius sect and invented his own particular heresy. At the end of his life Constantius changed his belief and adopted that of Eusebius that said: 'Two Beings whose birth is different. Their substance is also different. The Father is different from the Son, who cannot be said to be consubstantial with the Father.' Constantius exiled Athanasius Patriarch of Alexandria and the faithful. He later repented and abandoned this teaching, returning to the true faith. When he left to do battle with his cousin Julian, he passed through Cilicia, where he died aged 45. He had reigned for 38 years, 13 of them with his father.

At that time the Patriarch of Constantinople was Alexander, one of the 318. He was Patriarch for 23 years. Before his death he asked Paul to be his successor, and he was Patriarch for two years. Constantius then exiled him and replaced him with the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, who lasted for eighteen months. Paul and Athanasius then went to Rome to find the Emperor Constant, who wrote to his brother to have them recalled from exile, adding that if this did not happen, he would attack him. Constantius assembled the bishops and asked for their opinion. They advised him to do as his brother had asked, so the two bishops were recalled. At the death of Constant he persecuted them again and had Paul exiled. Athanasius had been warned and he fled. He wrote an apologia about what he had done, showing that a man has to feel from a monarch persecuting him. He supported this argument with texts taken from the prophets and the apostles. The Arians seized Paul and executed him after he had been Patriarch for four years.

¹²⁷ Italy and Africa, to which were added Illyria and Thrace.

At that time a hateful teaching made its appearance. A number of the fathers assembled and excommunicated those who believed it.

29. Story of Shahdost the Martyr and Tenth Catholicos

The name 'Shahdost' is Persian and means 'friend of the king'. He was from Beit Garmai, but some say he was from Susa. He was the archdeacon of Simeon bar Sabbae. As the Church was without a head after the death of Simeon, he offered himself to Our Lord Jesus Christ and was secretly named Patriarch. He was a good and pious man. It is said that the fathers and the faithful in secret prayed to God, wrote several names and drew lots. The name of Shahdost was drawn. He accepted the charge entrusted to him without fear of death and was invested as Patriarch in the house of a Christian. He chose those who were to replace the fathers martyred with Simeon. Among them there was Barbâ'ashmin, the nephew of Simeon bar Sabbae. They pledge to die for their flock. They visited Christians night and day to give them strength to resist the persecution of Shapur. Then the authority of Shahdost became clear and he was arrested by the Magi. Three nights previously he had a dream, in which he saw a ladder on the ground pointing to the sky. Simeon was standing on the ladder and saying: 'Shahdost, come up to me, as I came up here.' He knew what it meant. He spoke to the faithful, who became worried about him. Three days later he was seized at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, with 128 bishops, priests, deacons, monks and nuns. They remained in prison for five months, were subjected to all manner of torture and were urged to accept the religion of the Magi, but they did not give in. The satrap of Seleucia-Ctesiphon had 120 of them killed and then sent Shahdost with the nuns to Shapur. When the Patriarch appeared before Shapur, the king said to him: 'I killed Simeon the head of the Christians and many bishops and priests. Why have you become the head of these people whom I detest?' Shahdost replied: 'The head of the Christians is God and it is He who gives them the leader of His choice. In the same way that the water of the sea will not dry up, Christianity cannot be destroyed. The more you massacre them, the more they will multiply.' The wretch became angry with him, but then tried a gentle approach to persuade him to worship the sun and spoke kindly that he might embrace the religion of the Magi. He did not get a

favourable answer from him, but only coarse language and harsh words. Shapur ordered him to be killed, and Shahdost was executed on the same spot as Simeon. His companions were also killed. This happened in March after five months in prison. Among those killed were Miles al Razi and his pupil Aborsam, and others including the two sisters of Simeon. The faithful took their bodies and buried them in the church. According to what this story shows about him, his period (of office) was two years and five months.

30. Among the noble men of those days was

Gregory, whose name means 'the wakeful', also called the Theologian, which means the one who speaks of divine matters. He came from Caesarea, from a village called Arianze. His father, also called Gregory, was a Samaritan. His mother, Nonna, was Christian. When she became pregnant, she vowed that she would send her child to a monastery if it were a boy and that her husband would convert. This was at time of the meeting of the 318. His father had a dream in which he believed that he was reciting the Psalm that begins¹²⁸: *I rejoiced when I was told that we were going to the House of the Lord*. He became afraid. after a long His wife gently did so much to bring him to the faith that, after a long period of persuasion, he responded to her desire. He went to find a priest to receive baptism. As is customary the priest said: 'You are receiving baptism and renouncing Satan and his minions.' But he made an error and said: 'You will govern the Church without shame,', as is said over a bishop. When the priest had finished, he saw the neophyte enveloped in a dazzling light and predicted that he would on day become a bishop. In fact he was named Gregory of Nazianze towards the end of his life. He was of outstanding virtue and extremely learned.

¹²⁸ Ps. 122, 1. There are three words before the quotation, which look like Arabic words but do not make any sense to me. There are three words that preface this Psalm but they are quite different: (English) 'Song of degrees of Savic'.

Chronicle of Séert: 2

Anthony Alcock

This part (*Patrologia Orientalis* 5 pp. 231-342) contains stories 31 to 76 in this early 11th cent. Chronicle, written in all likelihood by Isho'denah. An index of the contents of Part 1 is provided on pp. 335-342.

I have to admit that the names in the translation are not written as they should be, but this is largely because they are not written using their own script. There are of course standard transcription systems, and while I am familiar with the Arabic one, I do not have the font necessary to reproduce it. For Persian and Syriac I have neither the font nor the knowledge to reproduce either. I can only hope that the names are at least recognizable.

There are bibliographical references in the notes which I have largely ignored, not because I think that they are unimportant but because I am unable to check them. These include Assemani, Bedjan and, of course, the church historians. Any scholarly translation would naturally take account of them.

The following is a summary of the preface to the text by F. Nau, one of the PO editors:

The Arabic text was sent by Archbishop Scher in 1906 without a translation. Part 1 was edited by M. Périer, and Part 2 was translated by Pierre Dib, who sent his translation to *PO* in 1908. The translation was revised by Father Ramia. and various notes are marked in the text with the initials S(her), D(ib) and N(au). Archbishop Scher was able to guide the publication of the while on a visit to the West.

The information provided by the text in the fascicule is not new but rather a summary of known facts without any attempt at 'editorial' rearrangement. The texts about Julian the Apostate are cited as examples of this.

The present work appears to be the indirect or direct source of the work of 'Amr and Sliba, *De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria* ed. and tr. by Enrico Gismondi (1896 and 1897). Examples to substantiate this suggestion are provided. This being the case, the Chronicle is probably the source of the Chronicle of Bar Hebraeus.

Many of the stories are summaries of the acts of saints and martyrs 'qui constituaient comme un ménologe oriental'. These have for the most part been published by P. Bedjan *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* (from 1890) and Ch. 64 comes from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

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31. Barba'shemin, the 11th Catholicos

The name means 'he of four names'.¹ This father was celebrated for his purity, his sanctity and his chastity. He was the nephew of Barsabbae from Beit Garmai. He resembled his uncle in character and followed in his footsteps. The fathers, fearing the wretched Shapur, consecrated him secretly in the house of some of the faithful.

He consecrated bishops and ordained priests and sent them secretly to various regions. He told them to disguise themselves as lay people in order to hide. He lived like this for seven years. It was a chalice of great bitterness for him as he saw Christians maltreated and persecuted.

It was their intention to kill² the heads and the priests, thinking to deprive Christians of those who confirmed them in their faith and to lead them of necessity to Magism. As the reign of Shapur went on and the persecution became more savage, they became more numerous in many countries, and only God could count them. They prayed for the blessing of God in support against Shapur.

They became tired of hiding and came out into the open, crying out with voices loud enough to break rocks: 'Even if you hack us to pieces, we will never worship the sun or the fire. Do with us as you please.' It is said that 230,000 were beheaded, among them Mar Milas³ and other leaders.

Shapur heard of Barba'shemin. He had him arrested and brought before him with sixteen other priests and deacons. He said to him: 'Did I not order the execution of the Christian leaders ? Why have you disobeyed me ? Why have you become their leader ?' Barba'shemin replied: 'Leadership of the Christians will not cease until the

1 Information found also in Bar Hebraeus *Chronicon* vol. 2 39-41 and the *Acta sanctorum et martyrorum* vol. 2 pp. 296-303. Another possible understanding: 'son of Baal of the heavens', in accordance with a name found in a Nabatean inscription cf. G. Westphal *Untersuchungen* (1901) p. 103

2 Supplied in the *critical apparatus*.

3 Bishop of Sûshan

passing of the world.' He was thrown into prison with his companions and chained for eleven months so that they became black and entirely desiccated from hunger and thirst.

Shapur then sent him a cup of gold with 1,000 drachmas⁴ with a message: 'Take these gifts I am offering you. I will release you and make you head of your people if you worship the sun.' But the blessed Barba'shemin replied to the royal messenger: 'Is he trying to deceive me like a child by asking me to renounce my Lord and taking gold ?' Shapur said to him: 'Take the presents I offer you. I will release you and make you head of your people if you worship the sun.' But Barba'shemin replied: 'Ask the king if he thinks he can deceive me as if I were a child and that I would deny my Lord and accept gold in exchange ?' Shapur said to him: 'If you do not accept the honour I am offering you, I will write to all the subjects of my empire to annihilate Christians.' Barba'shemin replied: 'The more Christians you kill, the more they will multiply.' So the king ordered his execution on the spot when Simeon and Shahdost had been executed. He was beheaded with a joyful expression on his face and a smile on his lips as he prayed for and blessed his flock. Thirteen others were martyred with him. In order to see him Christians gathered in such great numbers that they were jostling with each other. The Magi said: 'The words of Barba'shemin are true: the more Christians are killed, the more they multiply.'

The bishop of Susiane took the body of the virtuous Catholicos and buried him beside the archbishop of Gundishapur. The faithful took the other bodies and buried them. May their prayers for all be with the faithful. Shapur wrote to his subject to prevent Christians from choosing a new head and Catholicos to give the lie to Bara'shemin's words: 'being head of the Christians is not an idle matter.' But even in his ignorance he was certain that, though he might destroy the power in his empire, it would always persist elsewhere.

The Church was without a Catholicos for 39 years of his reign until the first year of

4 mithqâl (مثقال) given in Wehr's dictionary as 4,68 g

Bahrâm, surnamed Farmânshâh, at the age of 33. Barba'shemin was Catholicos for twelve years. The three fathers ordained by Shahdost were arrested. They were thrown into prison and left to suffer. At the time of Barba'shemin they were delivered with the help of God. They fled and went to live in caves. From that time there was no news of them. But in their new home they converted many, destroyed an idol worshipped by the locals and died in their retreats. Later, a monastery and school, where masters and pupils gathered, were built there and named after them. In the time of Mar Narses the buildings were enlarged.

32 Qardah the Martyr

Qardah⁵ lived at the time of Barba'shemin. He was one of the greatest Persians, noted for his bravery. When Shapur learned of his bravery and skill with a bow, he made him governor of the area from Garmai to Nisibis. He made Arbel his residence. Christians were very afraid of him. He built a castle on a high hill⁶ and named it after himself. He was then twenty-five. But God - praise be to him - wanted him for His own. One night Qardah had a dream about a handsome young man who struck his side with a lance and said to him: 'You will be killed for the love of Christ before finishing this fortress.' Qardah said: 'Who are you to tell me this?' The young man replied: 'I am George the martyr, disciple of Christ and master of the Byzantine empire. I come to tell you what the Lord told me.' Qardah then woke up afraid without recalling the dream. Now, on the mountain of Beit Bagas there was a hermit called Abd Yesu'. He too had a dream in which he was told to attend Qardah, for the latter was to inherit eternal life because of him. When Abd Yesu' arrived, Qardah ordered him to be flogged and imprisoned, and this was done. One day Qardah was in the square playing polo when the ball stuck to the ground. They tried to move it without success. One of them said to Qardah: 'The man you have just thrown into prison, I saw him raise his hand, make a sign of the cross in front of the ball and move his lips.' Qardah went home upset and very surprised. He summoned Abd Yesu' and asked him about the beliefs of Christians. Abd Yesu'

⁵ The Arabic spelling

⁶ Various forms in Syriac, e.g. 'melq'

explained and Qardah was converted and baptized. He then summoned another monk called Isaac, who read the gospel and translated it into Persian. Qardah stopped eating meat and drinking wine. He gave large donations to churches and monasteries. This upset his family. He spent two years in this way, fasting and praying.

Knowing he was reluctant to declare war, the Byzantines⁷ and other nations invaded his territory and laid it waste. He marched against them and said: 'Do you think I no longer have the strength to fight ? You are wrong. Christianity has armed me with an unconquerable sword.' He then fell upon them and cut them to pieces. And despite their numbers they were compelled to retreat before him.

On his return from the war he destroyed the fire temples and built churches instead. The Magi reported his behaviour to the king. 'You have heard that Qardah has become a Christian and destroyed the fire temples, but have you not heard that he routed thousands of Byzantines with his two hundred-strong cavalry ? Have you not heard of the Arabs he has killed in his lifetime ?' The mobed⁸ and the Magi were disturbed with what they had just heard from Shapur: 'Tell us honestly if you intend to destroy Magism and affirm Christianity. Otherwise, why would we leave this man in peace. ' Shapur was sad because of his love for Qardah, whose courage and bravery he admired. Nevertheless, he ordered Qardah to be imprisoned for seven months, to see if he would rebuild the fire temples and drive out the Christians. Otherwise he would be stoned at the door of his house. ⁹ Shapur sent two soldiers to him. Seven months elapsed, but Qardah remained unshakeable in his belief. He was brought out to be stoned. He asked Isaac to read out the story of Stephen¹⁰ to strengthen his heart. He was stoned uninterruptedly on his doorstep until he died. Large numbers of people gathered to see him. In the night Christians took his mortal remains and buried them. In year 49 of Shapur.¹¹ On the death of the latter -

7 Of the two designations used in this text I understand this one (روم) as 'Byzantine' and the other (يوناني) as 'Greek'.

8 Translator's note that this person was the equivalent of a Christian bishop.

9 The phrase 'at the door of his house': seems a curious detail. An extreme form of humiliation perhaps ?

10 Acts 7

11 359 AD

may he be loathsome to God and Hell be his dwelling place - the castle of Qardah became a great monastery where he is commemorated every year. May God remember us thanks to his prayers.

33. Julian the Apostate - may God curse him

In 672 of Alexander, when Constans, son of Constantine died Julian the unbeliever became Emperor. He was learned in the knowledge of unbelievers. This despot turned against Constantine the Great, even though he was his grandson. He disengaged from the yoke of obedience, denied his faith and began to worship idols, to which he offered sacrifice. He gathered together magicians and sorcerers who persuaded him to leave the true faith in favour of their impious practices. He met Athanasius of Caesarea¹² and Gregory of Nazianze at Ephesus when he was studying philosophy. The two saints could foresee what would become of him and that his malign spirit would goad him against Christians. They were distressed by him and they warned the faithful against him. When he achieved power, he began to persecute Christians, forcing them to embrace his religion and sacrifice to idols. He destroyed churches and constructed pagan temples over them. He killed many of the faithful. He fought barbarians and occupied their kingdoms. People thought he was another Alexander. He attacked the Persians from Constantinople, immolating his victims and making use of magic by consulting the entrails of men, women and children he had killed.

When he entered Palestine, he allowed the Jews to rebuild the temple to give the lie to word of Our Lord: One stone will not remain on another.¹³ But hardly did they start work when the earth began to tremble, with cyclones that destroyed several towns near Jerusalem and ruined all the equipment used for the restoration. Red crosses appeared on the clothes of Jews and they were difficult to remove.

¹² Note in *critical apparatus* : Basil.

¹³ Matt. 24 and 25.

Nevertheless, the impious Julian took no notice of the warning of Our Lord. He turned against the Persians, killed some and took others captive. He burned and laid waste towns and fortresses. Shapur was afraid. When it was clear that Julian had taken the Persian kingdom, he was struck by an arrow coming from the sky, near Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He knew what he had done. As he was dying, he said: 'You have conquered me. Galilean (his name for Our Lord). The kingdoms of heaven and earth are yours.'¹⁴ The reign of Julian lasted 19 months and he was 31.

34. Another version of the Julian the Apostate

The tyrant Julian rebelled against Constantine the Great, his grandfather. He broke the yoke of obedience, denied his faith and worshipped idols, to which he offered sacrifice. He assembled magicians and sorcerers, who persuaded him to reject the true faith to bend him to their will. Athanasius and the bishop of Nazianze saw him when they met at Ephesus, where he was studying philosophy and the magical arts. They saw what would one day become of him and the evil he would do to Christians. They were sad and warned the faithful about him. He consulted magicians about the future of his reign. They assembled the demons, whom they loved. But the despot became afraid of them when he saw them and smelled their vile smell. He made the sign of the cross, while continuing in his unbelief. The demons dispersed. The work of the magicians was to no avail. They blamed him and said: 'Your business was proceeding well until you ruined everything with the sign of the cross.' The wretch apologized to them and promised to leave the future to itself. Once again the demons gathered. Patiently they poured their greed and wickedness into his heart.¹⁵

Some explain his impiety thus: The sister of the king had secretly entrusted him with much money and an object of silver and gold. She made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When she got back, she asked Julian for the money. He denied all knowledge of it and denied her demand. The king was told and criticized her for

¹⁴ See Part One section

¹⁵ Story in Theodoret *Historia Ecclesiastica* III, 3

unwisely trusting him. 'Why did you not trust me with it ?' he said to her. 'Why did you trust him so easily ?' 'Because of his prayer and fasting', she replied. Julian was a genuine hypocrite. The king issued the following senetence against him: In the absence of judicial proof he had to swear an oath. He agreed and swore a false oath. He was reassured by this and his heart was possessed by a demon. He abandoned his religion and revealed himself for what he was. He forbade priests and monks to wear ecclesiastical garments and sent men to kill Anthusa,¹⁶ the mother of John Chrysostom, and many of the faithful.

When he learned of the death of Constantius, he sent the following letter to Eusebius: 'From Julian, who for 100 years,¹⁷ holds power in the world over everything beneath heaven, to Eusebius, the head Christian.

I have sent you 80 leaders that you might lead them and be one of the gods if you establish order on the borders of our territories, if you administer all that I entrust to you and if you remove Christian impiety from your heart. Wash and purify the big house stained by the Christian religion. Erect there a pulpit from which one will preach in my name, an altar nearby for the sacrifices to the seven and thirty-two gods who control the world.¹⁸ And I have given my envoys rich presents for you worthy of my majesty and the greatness of my empire. I have added a lance stained with blood, destined for those who resist my orders, secede or withdraw from my command. If you hasten to obey me, I will make you rich and you will not have to shed blood for me. But if you disobey, you will be responsible for shedding it.'

When the news reached Eusebius the Patriarch that the letter despot had written, he hastened to gather the people of Constantinople and in a sermon told them what awaited them and what they had to endure in the present crisis. He then

¹⁶ Arabic name: Qumbala (قومبالا)

¹⁷ It is worth noting that the expression of the 100 year reign occurs later twice, once said by Jovian and the other by Julian again. Is it meant to be a grandiose prophecy of the 1000 Year Reich variety ? Or perhaps a reference to the period that had elapsed since the ignominious capture of Valerian by Shapur 100 years earlier ? The entire episode, according to Nau's footnote, is extracted from the 6th cent. novel published by J.E.G. Hoffmann *Julian der Abtrünnige* (1880).

¹⁸ I do not know what these figures refer to.

encouraged them to be patient and promised them the kingdom of heaven. He continued to encourage them and give them joy to prepare them for martyrdom and suffering, until they themselves accepted their fate. Those who still belonged to the Emperor rejected the Patriarch and obeyed the orders of the Apostate, like pagans and Jews, still loyal to the empire. About 60,000 remained true to the Patriarch and were immovable.

Some days later those with the gifts, letter and lance arrived in the capital, accompanied by Julian's sister. But the Patriarch had stationed guards to deny them entry, lest they profane the church with their unbelieving bodies. The guards were told to obtain permission to allow them to enter, because the envoys had instructions to obey the Patriarch. When Eusebius learned of this, he presented himself before them like a spiritual king. He asked them to read out the letter. After the reading, he seized it from their hands and tore it up: 'Go and tell this igoramus who sent you that his kingdom will be torn apart like this letter and that his blood will be shed in another country.' They dispersed in the city, telling people what had happened to the Emperor's letter and threatening them with great harm. The pagans and Jews went to Julian's cousin, who had brought the gifts, and promised allegiance. They also plotted to build a wall around the church to enclose those within, like a prison, and build altars for sacrifices. The cousin did what they advised and wrote to tell Julian. When the Christians learned of this construction, they rushed to the churches and monasteries to tell the monks and priests to join the Patriarch because he had been immured in the church. Monks and nuns, men and women gathered without delay, tore down the wall and tied up the despot's cousin and asked that those with him be burned with the wood from the altars for sacrifice.

The Patriarch forbade them. But they paid no attention and burned them. The Patriarch ordered Julian's cousin to be saved. Once out of danger, he mounted a horse and returned to his lord to tell him what had happened. Julian was outraged and summoned his astrologer to tell him his fortune. The astrologer replied that he

would begin his reign as a victor but the end was completely obscure to him. The Emperor said he was resolved to take his sword and massacre the citizens of Rome, burn the city and rebuild it. The astrologer told him that he would not manage this and that if he tried to inflict this punishment, he would be defeated by them, for this city is protected by two old men.¹⁹ That if he did not base his power on Rome, he would not be called king but tyrant. He should be restrained until he was confirmed as Emperor like the others: 'If Rome recognizes you, you will be safe in the city and when you leave it. Whatever you do, victory will be yours.'

The wretch marched towards Rome, but nobody went to greet him. He wrote to the citizens to tell them that his intention was not to punish but to pardon them. He suggested that they attend him on the third day, feast of the gods, wearing white, because he too intended to wear royal garments and the crown, to have his name inscribed on the royal palace and distribute largesse to the soldiers. When his letter was read out, they clothed themselves in black and went to meet him. This angered him excessively. He said to them: 'I was wrong to treat you with consideration. I should have exacted vengeance.' They replied: 'You will never wear the royal cloak or the crown here. For, well before this meeting, you were careful to announce the persecution, but to preface your promise to behave well with threats. You will never receive royal honours from us unless you leave each nation in peace and make each religion free.' The astrologer advised him to accede to their demand, to receive the royal garb and withdraw. He then wrote a letter that was read out to the assembly. He told them that he had decided to assume the royal garb in this city, the first of the Roman empire, and gladden the people. Each one of them would have religious freedom. In this they would be different from those in other cities. He ordered them to dress in white and appear before him. The citizens changed and dressed in stylish expensive garments. The despot rewarded them with large amounts of money. Everybody attended him and, for seven days, they gave themselves over to the games and dancing with young women.

¹⁹ The Arabic 'sheikh' has rather more dignity attached to it than the English. Peter and Paul, the Christian version, one might say, of Romulus and Remus.

He then told the astrologer: 'Allow me to pardon the Romans, but I cannot allow this disgraceful old man to live', meaning the Patriarch. The astrologer replied: 'Do not oppose this person. You have no authority over him. He has the two old men at either side of him. But Julian did not listen and summoned the Patriarch to his presence: 'Do not think I am putting you to death because of your religion, which would make you happy, but because you have killed 80 priests, servants of the gods.' The Patriarch replied: 'You impious one will not be able to take my life. These people were rather the servants of demons. Are you not ashamed to call these demons 'gods' ?' Julian ordered him to be bound and placed on the altar for the sacrifices, a fire to be lit and Eusebius to be consigned to the flames. But the Patriarch repelled those who would bind him. The Emperor ordered fire to be cast at him from all sides of the altar. But no sooner had the order been given than a strong wind rose up and blew out the fire. It was followed by thunder and lightning, and the fire was split into two and consumed those in charge of the stake together with idols and many unbelievers. But Julian quickly mounted a speedy horse and was able to escape. The Patriarch kept to his place, safe and sound. He came down from the altar, worshipping God and asking Him for a miracle. He returned to the church where he was greeted with prayer, joy and tears because of the sublime things that they had just seen. Three days later, Julian ascended his impure throne and summoned the Patriarch: 'Do not think that it was the Christian God who did this. The gods were annoyed with the priests ...²⁰ for having placed an unclean offering on the altar. Today, you lose. Go and tell the Nazarene, your saviour.' Eusebius replied: 'You will soon see how the Nazarene will destroy you and make you the object of people's conversation.'

The wretch ordered the saint to stand upright and told the archers to fire their arrows at him and the executioners to stand behind and kill him with their swords if he tried to escape. Each arrow rebounded against the archer that had fired it and killed him. Julian, angry, ordered the executioners to put him to the sword. But as soon as a sword was unsheathed the hand of the swordsman withered. Julian then said Eusebius: 'What is the meaning of this magic of yours ?'

²⁰ Unknown word

The astrologer said to Julian: 'The empire is yours. Leave this place and let the old one go.' But Julian ordered the saint to be out in chains and thrown into a dungeon. He then left Rome and returned to Constantinople. He wrote²¹ to them, as he had written to the Romans. It was read out and one of the nobles²² tore it up. Julian's cousin was told of this. As Julian was approaching the city, someone came to meet him and ask him to pardon the noble. Julian agreed. But the noble clothed himself as a servant²³ to be near to the Emperor and, when he had the chance, struck, saying: 'You will be pursued by misfortune during your reign.' The crown fell from his head. The noble was struck with lances and died. Those who had interceded on his behalf requested his corpse from the Emperor to bury it, and permission for them to do was granted.

Julian chose from among the nobles a wise man called Jovian and made him commander of the army. He took him along to ...²⁴ Four hundred Jewish priests came from Jerusalem to meet him, carrying a crown and the seven idols.²⁵ At first, he was distrustful and took them for Christians. But, having discovered that they were not Christians, he said: 'If you obey, eat meat that the Law prohibits.' They ate. They worshipped their gods and sacrificed several times. He welcomed them warmly, took the crown and promised that on his return he would rebuild the Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.²⁶

When he learned of the luxury and magnificence of the Church at Edessa, he ordered Jovian to demolish it and recover the precious marble from it. Jovian said: 'Our reign is 100 years. If we were to spend (the contents of) the treasury, we would not build anything like it. It is more reasonable to lock it up with imperial seals until we return. After that it will be cleaned, purified and consecrated to our gods.'²⁷

21 The author of this text seems to be aware of Julian's taste for writing letters.

22 Maximus, according to the footnote's reference to Hoffmann *op.cit.* p. 79

23 Syriac passage with similar wording, cf. Hoffmann *op.cit.* p.95

24 Lacuna

25 Jews from Lake Tiberias are said to have made a crown with seven images. Hoffmann p.108

26 Not to mention the destruction by Titus.

27 It is difficult to escape the feeling that in policy exchanges with advisors Julian is often portrayed as someone of little practical intelligence.

Julian approved of this and wrote to the inhabitants of Edessa, reassuring them of his goodwill and admiration for the splendour of their city. He also promised to send them forty of his priests to purify this fine building for sacrifices to the gods. The people of Edessa tore up the letter and prevented his people from entering the city. When he learned of this, he told the commander of his army to march into the city with his troops, but he said: 'Christians believe that dying for religion is living. Besides, the city is always in our hands and our reign is of 100 years. Now we have to turn to the enemy. Let us go there lest they be on their guard and closes the gates of Persia to us. Besides, the people of Edessa will perhaps have regretted their error.' The Emperor saw the wisdom of this and ordered the army east. The commander left for Nisibis and the people in Edessa covered the walls with sacks and threw ashes on them, a sign of mourning for the loss of Constantine. As Julian passed by Harran, he was well received by the residents, infidels like himself, who never failed to abuse Christians. He celebrated their local gods' feasts and gave them money. He then made for Nisibis, accompanied by a throng, when his horse stopped. He struck it, and the horse turned to him. The reins became entangled in his garments and tore his imperial purple. His crown fell off and the royal standard, borne before him, broke. The Emperor was upset. He gathered 400 priests and all the magicians of Harran and wanted to know what had just happened. He was told that Christians hiding in his army were defiling it and the gods were angry and that he should tell them to go away. Julian, in fact, had brought along a cross that his soldiers could see. If his army were defeated, he could blame the cross; if it were victorious, he could attribute the success to his large army. The cross was removed from his army of 10,000 cavalry, which proceeded to Edessa and engaged the citizens.

At Nisibis there was a bishop called Ula', ²⁸ who preached to the people: 'If you love the kingdom of heaven, follow me to the village of Ma'are. Let him embrace the faith with us and never again abandon the love of Christ.' Tens of thousands followed him and swore an oath on the gospel that had been placed in the midst of them.

28 According to the footnote, the name in Syriac is ܘܠܐ and I suspect that the Arabic form should be ولاغ

Jovian found out about this and turned towards them. When he saw them, he told them what he had been thinking in secret and stayed with them, fully intending not to return to the camp. He had seen the angel of the Lord, who said to him: 'Christ has received your deed. Do not be sad and do not be afraid for Ula'. He will not be harmed or any of his people. Go back to your camp. Continue to command your army and, with your help, I will convert them to Christianity. Do not reveal your faith, because I have something else for you. Tell Ula' and those with him what I have just told you.'

The commander of the of the accursed Shapur, king of Persia,²⁹ was also a believer. The angel visited both and told each one that the other was a Christian. When Julian was at Harran, Jovian wrote to Urfahârmubata³⁰ the Christian and commander of the Persian army that the Roman army was marching against the Persians, they were more likely to receive the faith than the Romans, that it was therefore necessary to conceal this from Chosroes³¹ and guarantee victory to the Romans. The Persian general replied to Jovian and asked him to hasten before the king found out about it and deployed his army. He then promised to arrange everything for the conquest of the whole of Persia and bring back the Persian king alive to Caesar, who would ...³² the eyes of Chosroes and parade him before the Roman soldiers. As for the Persian soldiers, they too would be handed over to Caesar.

Julian one day heard prayers being said at Ma'ara.³³ He wanted to know what they were. An opponent of Jovian told him that the head Christian was in league with Jovian, who was becoming dissident and had left for Ma'are with some friends.³⁴ Jovian remained there, according to the informant, and sacrificed to their gods, all of this while Julian was at Harran. Julian sent troops to besiege Ma'are and

29 Critical apparatus note: 'illegible word'.

30 Note: Hoffmann p. 107 gives the Syriac form Armihar the Mofta (ܐܪܡܝܗܐ ܡܘܬܐ)

31 Shapur

32 Lacuna. I wonder if the expression is similar to the colloquial British English 'have your eye wiped', meaning 'to unexpectedly experience something unpleasant'. Or perhaps Chosroes would be blindfolded as an act of humiliation ?

33 These meetings had been reported to Julian by the Jewish opponents of Christians.

34 Text not clear

summoned Jovian. He then ordered Jovian's tunic to be torn from him and Jovian to be stripped of his command. But for fear of provoking the nobles of Constantinople, he let Jovian live, because he was of local nobility. He replaced Jovian with the informant. But, providentially, Jovian's envoy to the Persian general arrived with a reply to his letter sewn into his garments. Jovian's replacement seized the messenger, who told him that he had just returned from the Persian general. Jovian's opponent told Julian that the former imperial confidant had been communicating with the enemy. Julian questioned the messenger, who removed the letter from his clothing and showed it to the Emperor. Julian read it and saw that the Persian general accepted the proposal outlined above. He felt great joy: 'What an astute man ! He was preparing our victory while appearing to be suspicious, and we favoured his traducer !' He then ordered the siege of Ma'ara to be lifted and no one to be persecuted because of religious faith; everyone should be free to choose religious belief and pray for our victory, for we are on the eve of battle with our enemies; and as for Ula' and his followers, we will let them worship their God to pray for our victory. He then summoned the traducers of Jovian and had them crucified. He let it be known that anyone who slandered Jovian would receive the same treatment. He apologized to the people of Constantinople³⁵ and asked to bring Jovian to him, whereupon he re-invested him, mounted him on a charger of his chariot and ordered the nobles to arch in front, with the crucified in front of them. In this way he triumphally paraded before the army. When Jovian returned to the Emperor, he handed him the letter of Urfârmubata ³⁶ and told him to act in accordance with the letter. He swore to him that he bore no ill will for what he had done. Jovian swore an oath and led his troops to the Tigris. He had 80,000 cavalry, 120,000 archers, 200,000 well armed soldiers, 200,000 with shields, lances and all sorts of weapons and 120,000 officers.³⁷ By the time the Byzantines had entered their country, the locals, unable to organize resistance, and did not have a chance to group themselves and were put to the sword, their citadels and fortresses destroyed.

35 Ar . 'qustantinia'. قسطنطينية

36 Scher suggests reading 'mobed' with 'Aderbira', a sort of Persian fire-temple angel

37 Translator: 'nombres plus forts dans Hoffmann p. 162', which I do not understand. The mere thought of an army of almost three quarters of a million, all apparently marching together, is quite staggering. The total number of legions, for example, that could be deployed under Augustus was about 25 (max. 150,000)

The Byzantines became masters of the region. According to some accounts, the army was 490,000 strong.

A witness to the massive bloodshed, the noble Jovian said to Julian: 'It would be better for us to rule a prosperous country than one in ruins and forever be called murderers. If the land is not well populated, it will not support us. It would be better to move people from one town to another.' The Emperor agreed and announced peace. The Persians were grateful for this and pledged allegiance to him. Shapur fled to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, where he took possession of riches of mountainous proportions. He celebrated the feasts of the gods. The wretch also prostrated himself before Aphrodite, to whom he prayed. He then collected an army as numerous as the grains of sand, occupied the outlying districts of the city to prevent the Byzantine army from leaving or entering. Between the two armies was the village of Beit Nasab. Jovian sent word to the Persian general: 'Is this how you keep your promise ...³⁸ "I will deliver Shapur to you" ?' Aurfahâr³⁹ said to Shapur: 'You are near your enemy, and all that remains is to meet him. Do not attack a people of whom you know neither the strength nor the weakness.'

35. Yunan, Anchorite of Anbâr

[... Beginning is missing ...] There was also a man drawing water with a pail. Early one day he went to draw water from the Euphrates,⁴⁰ and he was bitten in the foot by a viper. The saint was told. He came to see the man and made the sign of the cross over the bite. The man was cured that same night and went back to drawing water in a pail.

Around his holy tent there were wild beasts ...⁴¹, but they did not dare attack the saint's visitors. One of the animals was struck by the sword of a hunter and it came to the saint growling in pain. The saint arose, took some earth, blessed it and

38 Illegible

39 Syriac: Arimhar

40 Syriac version slightly different

41 Critical apparatus: perhaps 'demons'. Syriac version specifies 'many lions'.

applied it to the wounds. The animal was healed instantly.

The two saints Mar Yunan and Mar Eugene, together with other brothers, went to see the king, who had heard about Yunan and his miracles. When Shapur saw their glory, light and splendour, he welcomed them with great respect, veneration and kindness. He listened aimiably to them and treated them with familiarity. The Magi became envious and came it to debate with Mar Eugene. Despite being vanquished in the presence of Shapur, they persisted in continuing. Mar Eugene said to Shapur: 'Let the king order a large fire to be lit in his presence. We will enter it with the Magi who have been debating with us. He who remains safe and sound, let his God be recognized as the true one.' Shapur, surprised by this, arranged it with the Magi. Wood was brought and the fire was lit. Mar Eugene said to the Magi: 'Go in first and stand upright in the middle. You will not be harmed by the fire because you worship it.' If the words alone were difficult for the Magi, the practice was impossible. Mar Eugene said to Mar Yunan: 'Throw yourself on the fire, my brother.' Mar Yunan, eager to astonish the king and his priests, removed his sandals, threw his cloak over his shoulder and walked barefoot to the middle of the fire, where he sat down among the flames around and above him. Shapur thought that Mar Yunan would not remain safe and sound for long in this inferno. He was amazed and thanked God and said to the Magi: 'Now it is your turn. Stay there, if you can, with the Nazarenes.' They refused. The king said: 'Think of the consequences of your refusal and the punishment that awaits you. I will hack off your limbs and plunder your houses.' This was no sooner said than done. Mar Eugene told his companion to come out of the fire. Shapur and the nobles of his kingdom were astonished that there was no trace of the fire on the saint or his clothes or hair. At nightfall Mar Yunan left the region and retired to the desert of Anbâr. We have told of only a few of his miracles. There are so many of them. He asked his friend, the Marzbân⁴² that his tent be transformed into a place of prayer after his death, where the name of God would be glorified. After his death he was buried on the site of his tent, and nearby a sanctuary and several cells were constructed.

42 Governor of a frontier province

The brothers and residents wanted to transfer the body of Mar Yunan from his tent to another place, but no agreement was reached. Wasps came out of the tomb and attacked them. One of the people had a dream in which someone said: 'Do not tire yourselves, for Christ has chosen someone to transfer him to another sanctuary.' He then appeared to Mar 'Abdâ, son of Hanif,⁴³ and told him to go and pray near Mar Yunan and take his body to the sanctuary of Anbâr. The brothers all gathered and, carrying the cross and the gospel. They went there in their turn. After praying, Mar 'Abdâ began to pray and prostrated himself before the shroud of Mar Yunan. He lifted the shroud with his brothers and carried it in triumph, singing hymns as on Palm Sunday, to the place where his body still rests. There were miracles and prodigies. The body of the saint was found to be intact. Unwilling to put the body in the ground, the fathers placed it in a wall to the right of the altar, near the baptistery. Mar 'Abdâ the anchorite⁴⁴ said farewell to his brothers and left.

May the prayers of this saint protect us. His commemoration day is the third Sunday of Easter.

36 John of the monastery of Beit Zabde

He was a disciple of Mar Eugene, who withdrew to the land of Beit Zabde and lived in the desert. He travelled to all the villages converting the people. He built a church. After his death he was buried in the monastery of Castra.⁴⁵ He constructed a building that was formerly a house of idols and demons, but every time the monks went to draw water from the spring, they were stoned by the demons, and it got worse, so they raised the shroud of the saint and put it on the spring for three days. The stoning stopped. The body was transferred to the place where he was buried in the monastery

Rabban Afnimiran from the monastery of Za'farân⁴⁶ bears testimony to the worth

⁴³ The translation must have taken place many years later because Mar 'Abdâ is attested only in the 7th cent.

⁴⁴ The Arabic is a form of the Greek word

⁴⁵ The fortress of Beit Zabde.

⁴⁶ NW of Mosul

of this saint and attests to the truth, in a work written by himself, of what has been told here.

37. Rabban Sari

This saint, disciple of Mar Eugene was one of those who accompanied him to the desert of Egypt. There were about twenty-eight of them. He went to the desert of Darâ, built churches and monasteries, converted some and cured many sick people. At the end of his life he built a monastery that still bears his name.

38. The monastery of Zarnuqa

Mar Eugene had a disciple called Aha. He went to Beit Zabde and converted many. He built a large monastery⁴⁷ with many monks. After his death he was buried there. The monks had difficulty drawing water with a pail. God demonstrated His benevolence thanks to the sacred remains of the saint and the prayers of Isho'barnoun. A spring of very sweet water arose from below the foundations the church, and this saved them a lot of trouble. For this reason the monastery is called Zarnuq.⁴⁸

39. Mar Cyprian, bishop of Africa

Among the celebrated doctors and monks of the time was Alzenon, a monk of the desert of Egypt, Isidore in the desert of Scetis ⁴⁹and Cyprian who became bishop of Africa. The latter was a pagan originally, who distressed the faithful with his words and deeds. He believed in magic and practised it. He was a well-known fornicator of unbridled passion. God chose him and detached him from paganism through the offices of a holy woman called Justa. Faith and knowledge grew and became

⁴⁷ Ar. دير

⁴⁸ I do not understand this

⁴⁹ I cannot identify either of the people or the 'Egyptian' desert. An Isidorus known at Nitria, which may have been confused with Scetis (Wadi Natrun). Two saints called Cyprian (one of Antioch and one of Carthage) have been fused together.

manifest in him, and he burned the books he had used in his magic in the presence of all.

Consecrated bishop of Africa, Cyprian gathered together, on the orders of Stephen and Cornelius Pope of Rome, 19 bishops. He demanded the re-baptism of those who had denied the Trinity and published twenty canons on the subject. He wrote a defence of Christianity, baptized many and refuted the errors of Paul of Samosata in writing. He was martyred under Valerian, the Emperor, with Lyrmassus, Patriarch of Jerusalem.⁵⁰

40. St Barshabâ

He was one of those exiled from the west by Shapur son of Ardashir. He learned Syriac at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He also learned Persian, studied the books of the church and became well-known for his medical knowledge. Dressed as a foreigner he confined himself to the house of God. He did not eat meat or drink wine. He practised asceticism from an early age. Shapur heard of him and summoned him. The saint attended Shapur's wife, who was suffering from an illness, and cured her. Shapur became very fond of him. But he had a sister called Shirarân, whom he had married in accordance with Magi law. She was possessed by a demon, which tormented her. Shapur asked all the astrologers, doctors and magicians to cure her. They suggested every cure and remedy possible, but to no effect. She had a dream of a person who told her not to be afflicted with pain but to become a Christian and be cured by baptism. She thought about this vision, and the following night had an astonishing dream⁵¹ in which she was told: 'Shirarân, do not be afraid. God has chosen you. He will lead you from the kingdom on earth and you will become His servant and cured of your sufferings. Believe, have yourself baptized, and the demon will leave you.' She sent to Seleucia-Ctesiphon for Barshabâ, unrivalled by anyone at the time. She told him what had happened. The saint explained

⁵⁰ It was Sixtus II who was martyred with Cyprian

⁵¹ Reading uncertain

Christianity to her, told her what she needed and showed her the horrors of the religion of the Magi. She believed, was baptized and renounced the worship of earthly things. The demon left her. She then devoted herself to the pursuit of knowledge. The Magi were extremely disturbed. When Shapur heard of this, he became angry and refused to believe that the demon had left her. He said he would kill her if she did not worship the sun. The Marzbân of Merv, who was a descendant of Sâsân, was with him when he returned from Nisibis at the time of the treaty with Jovian. Shapur explained his sister's condition and told him to remove her from the Christians and anyone who might teach her Christianity. He was afraid that she might suffer the same fate as Estassa, who had been put to death for her Christian belief. He also allowed the Marzbân to marry her. Daniel son of Maryam talks of this in his book.⁵² The Marzba took her with him and married her. Before she left, she asked the bishops to make Barshabâ bishop: there had been no Patriarch after the murder of Barba'shemîn because of the prohibition of Shapur.

When she arrived in Merv, she continued to convert all who came to visit her. She told them what had happened to her, that she had been cured when she embraced Christianity. She explained the horrors of their religion and promised that Barshabâ would visit them. Some people in Merv accepted what she said. Of Greek origin, they had come with Alexander and helped to found the city but had not returned with him. They embraced Christianity and destroyed the idols they had worshipped.

She asked architects to build her a church. Not knowing what form to give it, they adopted the design it on the same plan as the royal palace. She called it Ctesiphon, the name of the Two Cities.

She had a son by the Marzbân. She wrote to Shapur, asking him to send Barshabâ, because her illness had returned. Shapur, happy with the birth of the child, sent Barshabâ in great ceremony.⁵³ He took priests, deacons and liturgical books and ornaments with him. He was received by a crowd at Merv. He made his way to the

⁵² Footnote ref. to G. Assemani *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (4 vols. 1719-1728) III part 1 p. 231.

⁵³ The form in the text and the form in the critical apparatus are slightly different from each other, but I can find neither in the dictionary.

church and thanked God for His gift to the queen. He consecrated the altar, baptized people and cured the sick. He also baptized many Magi. He built several churches there, which he endowed with funds, vineyards and other goods. Glory be to the Almighty ! From the house of the king he sent some to preach the gospel in the whole country of Khorâsân. In fact, Barshabâ's disciples spread throughout Khorâsân, building churches and baptizing. Barshabâ then died and was buried in the monastery of David. His death made the people of these countries afraid and they wept for three days. On the fourth day after his burial they saw a light on his grave and inhaled a fragrance and heard a voice saying: 'I have heard the sound of your voice. I have replied to your call and sent Barshabâ as your bishop who will look after your souls.' Barshabâ came out of the grave in the presence of everyone. Some were doubtful and thought he was a ghost. But they found his left eye transformed and believed in the truth of the resurrection. Several embraced Christianity. Barshabâ lived another 15 years. He had been bishop for 70 years. If God prolonged his life and resurrected him from the dead, it was because of his zeal for this people, to help converts from paganism, to keep their children in the faith, strengthen their souls and increase their faith and belief in the resurrection, as God did with Moses when He left him in the desert with all those who had come out of Egypt with him. It was only their children, who did not know the gods of Egypt, who lived after him and entered the Promised Land.

God had performed the miracle of resurrection many times when He saw how useful it was for the people of that period. He revived St George the martyr, as a result of which many became Christians. Christians of all sects and empires recognize the worth of this martyr. commemorate him and build churches in his name. Mar John Dailomaya⁵⁴ entered the fire and came out safe and sound. Peter resurrected Tabitha after her death to strengthen the faith of his disciples. Mar Nestorius⁵⁵ resurrected a dead man to confound the impious who had exiled him. God extended the life of Hezekiah that he might marry and have a son to inherit his throne. There are many to whom God restored life after their death. Barshabâ died

⁵⁴ Footnote: There is a poem in his honour ms. syr. 2020 in Cambridge.

⁵⁵ This seems to be one of the few references to Nestorius in the text.

and was the first to be inscribed on the diptychs⁵⁶ of Merv. May his prayers preserve us.

After the death of Shirawan,⁵⁷ Asphahid⁵⁸ of Khorâsân, Shapur transferred the office to his nephew Khoshken, who was given in marriage to his sister, daughter of Shirarân. Khoshken was well-disposed to Christians. Before his mother died, she told him to look after the churches, take care of Christians and reduce the tax burden on them. She also entrusted the welfare of her daughter to them both, and they fulfilled her command, doing what she had advised throughout their whole life. Her daughter Zarndoukht followed the religion of the Magi, like her father. Nevertheless, she had a keen interest in Christian churches.

41. Rabban Shallita

At this time Saint Shallita appeared at Alexandria. He fought against the Devil with his good conduct and was an opponent of the Arian party. The governor, an Arian and implacable enemy of the faithful, struck him and drove him out of the city. He went to the land of the Copts,⁵⁹ among whom he cured a leper, which made many converts. He then travelled to Nisibis with Mar Eugene. After the dispersion of his disciples, Shallita turned towards Beit Zabdai, where he converted the entire town, smashed an idol they worshipped and built a monastery that still bears his name. He then went to Balad to be blessed by some saints. He died there and was buried in a cave known as Awana opposite Balad, at a place called al Duweir in a forest. A large monastery was built over his grave.

42. The earthquake and hail

⁵⁶ Usually lists of living and dead. If the name of a living bishop was on a diptych in a church, it usually meant that that church was in communion with him.

⁵⁷ شيروان

⁵⁸ Perhaps 'Spahbad', military governor

⁵⁹ This reflects the distinction that had always been made between Alexandria (πρὸς Αἴγυπτον/ad Aegyptum) and Egypt cf. H. Idris Bell 'Alexandria ad Aegyptum' *Journal of Roman Studies* 26 (1946): 130ff.

In the year 680 of Alexander there was a great earthquake in the East and the West. Large hailstones fell on Constantinople in July.⁶⁰ The water overflowed and many people were drowned and some towns submerged. Nicaea was destroyed. Three towns in Persia were destroyed by earthquake. It was a punishment of God to make people obey and repent.

43. Ardashir II, brother of Shapur II and of Shapur son of Shapur

Shapur was king for 70 years, 11 months and several days. His death in 686 of Alexander brought Ardashir to the throne, his heir, who lived in Niniveh. The Magi, who were afraid of him, insulted him to his face. Like his brother, he was hostile to Christians and massacred them. But four years after ascending the throne, there was a military conspiracy to dethrone him. He was replaced by Shapur (III) son of Shapur, in year 15 of Valens. Ardashir died of grief. His successor distributed largesse among the troops. He then targetted his chiefs and imposed heavy taxes on them. He released Christian prisoners, on the grounds that once released they would resume their life and pay their taxes, which would be more useful to the state. The Magi had difficulty discharging these obligations and considered assassinating him. One day, while he was out hunting, he tried sleeping in a tent to take his rest. When he was overcome by sleep, the tent pegs were removed and the tent collapsed on him and killed him. He had reigned for five years.

44. Valentinian and Gratian his son

⁶⁰ Tammuz. Earthquake and hail are reported in Constantinople by Socrates *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4, 11 in 367 AD

Valens having been burned in the village,⁶¹ the empire was entrusted to Valentinian II, son of Valentinian and Gratian his brother. They administered the empire well. They recalled the fathers exiled under Valens and began persecuting Manichaeans and other supporters of unhealthy doctrines. Then both died in the same year. The reign of Valentinian was one year and a half; that of Gratian fifteen years, twelve with his father and three after his death.

45. Theodosius the Great

Valens having been burned, Gratian co-opted Theodosius the Great, brave, victorious, kind and sincere. To avenge his brother's death he attacked the barbarians who had killed him. He routed them and returned to Constantinople. In 690 of Alexander the government of the whole empire passed into his hands. He recalled the bishops exiled by Valens and drove out the Arians who had dominated the Church for 40 years, from the sixth year of Constantine, who had exiled Athanasius of Alexandria and Paul of Constantinople, the year of the council in Antioch. In the second year of his reign Theodosius summoned the Council of Constantinople with 115 fathers, the chief of whom was Meletius Patriarch of Antioch and Diodorus bishop of Tarsus. Among the fathers were Helladius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianze, Amphilochus of Iconium, Amvrose and the archdeacon representing Damasus of Rome. They approved the creed of the 318 and anathematized Macedonius of Rome and his followers, who denied that the Holy Spirit was equal in substance to the Father and Son.

In the fifth year of his reign Theodosius ordered all the teachings to be codified in one volume, and this was done.⁶² He then placed the book on the altar and said a prayer. He saw in a dream that there was no true faith outside the 318 and the

⁶¹ Ammianus Marcellinus *Rerum Gestarum* has three accounts of Valens' death, and this refers to the second, according to which the Emperor, wounded at the Battle of Adrianople fighting the Goths, was taken to a nearby cottage (*prope ad agrestem casam relatum*), which was subsequently torched by the enemy (Bk 31, 13, 14ff).

⁶² This may be a reference to the *Cunctos populos* in *Codex Theodosianus* 16,1-2

equality of persons. He set fire to the other creeds and drove out adherents of false doctrines. He destroyed pagan temples throughout the empire.

46. How Theodosius obeyed when denied entry into the church

The faith of Theodosius was strong. He had to hasten to Thessalonica, which needed help against the governor who was responsible for justice in the city. Heartlessly and cruelly he had a large number of barbarians march against the city. He killed 7,000 people. When he arrived in the city, he made for the church, but Ambrose denied him entry on the grounds that he had slaughtered so many people and was therefore not allowed to enter the church. Theodosius, profoundly humble and deeply sincere, obeyed Ambrose, showing great respect for the priesthood. Afraid and contrite, he withdrew in tears, wept for the next eight months and abstained from attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist. When Christmas drew near, he begged Rufinus, a friend of Ambrose, to obtain permission for him to attend Mass and receive Communion. Rufinus told Ambrose that Theodosius had been weeping for the last eight months and that because he had been so obedient entry into the church should not be denied to him. Ambrose was resolute and declared he would chase Theodosius away if he came to celebrate the feast. Theodosius went to the door of the church and no further. He prostrated himself, wept and confessed his sins and promised that he would repeat such a crime. The people saw how sincere his faith was. He was allowed into the church. He promised not to punish anyone without first hearing their case for their three days. Inside the church Ambrose said to him: 'It is the best day of your life, my son. You have confessed to human weakness.' The Emperor wanted to be in the sanctuary reserved for Emperors, but Ambrose refused: 'It is not the garb of royalty that confers the priesthood. You have no business here.' The Emperor replied that his peers had had this privilege. Ambrose said that other Patriarchs had flattered the Emperors and that Isaiah had been stripped of his prophetic gift for having allowed

Hosia to exceed the limits of his royal dignity. Theodosius said: 'I am ready to obey you.' He left the sanctuary and joined the congregation. He then went to Constantinople, where he also joined the congregation. Nectarius the Patriarch asked him why and Theodosius replied that Ambrose had told him to do so and that he would not disobey him. What a fine thing imperial obedience is !

The wife of Theodosius wore only the roughest fabric next to her skin. She attended the sick in hospitals, emptied their bedpans and washed their wounds.⁶³ With her servants, she visited all the sick, clothing and giving alms to them. She even went to Antioch to perform charitable works. This annoyed some ill-minded people, who insulted her and drove her from the church. Theodosius heard of this, who disguised his anger for three days. He then sent two generals to Antioch with an large army to torch the city. On their way the generals met a monk in the hillside, who told them not to follow the order: 'Your master is mortal and will soon no longer exist. God made him king of creatures formed in His image to convert the lost, support the mentally infirm and pardon the guilty. He is not king to pursue his own interest and annihilate many people because of only one of his subjects, a mortal like himself. If the Emperor can be upset because his statue of bronze or silver is contemptuously broken, then how much more will God be angry to see His image annihilated. May the Emperor always have God in his soul.'

The two generals wrote to the Emperor about their conversation with the monk. His anger subsided and burning resentment was extinguished. He accepted the word of the monk and recalled the two generals, who returned.

When Mar Flavianus the companion of Diodorus, was accused of professing the wrong faith, the Emperor ordered him to travel to the West to defend himself against the accusations. He replied: 'If I am accused because of faith or the impurity of my body or the injustice of my arguments, if I am accused of having taken bribes to distort the truth or having used gold and silver for corruption and defended lies, I

⁶³ One can only speculate whether she had any contact with the *Parabalani/Parabolani*, whose activities were so closely regulated by her husband cf. Codex Theodosianus 16, 2:42

will choose equitable judges esteemed by the Emperor and his friends to defend myself in their presence. If people talk about me because of my see or authority, I have no need of them, or anything else.' The Emperor was surprised by his courage, the beauty of his language and contempt for things others seek after. He ordered Flavianus to do his duty and continue to look after his flock.

It happened that Theodosius was attacked by large numbers of vagabonds.⁶⁴ This caused him great disquiet. He went to find a certain monk, John the guardian, who lived in the desert and told him about these enemies and his own concern. John told him to trust God and not to fear. The victorious Emperor did not trust the monk. That night he had a dream of this same monk accompanied by Philip. On horseback before the troops, both were saying to him: 'Do not be afraid. God is with you. He will give you victory.' One of his generals had the same dream and he told the Emperor. All were given courage by this. But the head of the large enemy force proved to be arrogant. He said to his people: 'If Theodosius falls into your hands, put him in chains and bring him to me.' At the height of the fray, the enemy was routed. God scattered his troops, destroyed his soldiers and made him fall into the trap he had laid. In chains the enemy was brought before Theodosius, and not the other way around, as he had imagined.

Theodosius died at Antioch aged 66. He had been Emperor for 17 years. His two sons took him to Constantinople, where he was buried. His son Arcadius succeeded him. The Patriarch Necatrius died in the same year. Arcadius appointed a new Patriarch, John Chrysostom,⁶⁵ who held the same beliefs as Theodore of Mopsuestia⁶⁶

47. Destruction of the Temple of Serapis

⁶⁴ Nau cites Theodoret 5, 23

⁶⁵ Ar. 'of the mouth of gold' فم الذهب

⁶⁶ The name given here is 'interpreter'.

At the time of Theodosius the Great the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, convened an assembly of saints in the desert and asked for their prayers to destroy the temple of Serapis,⁶⁷ where the devil had been appearing. After it had been destroyed, a stone with the following inscription was found: 'When the three Ts reign, the temple of Serapis will be destroyed: Theon. Theophilus, Theodosius. The last named destroyed paganism in the empire and, in his deeds, was similar to Constantine. He assembled 150 bishops in the second year of his reign. In the fifth he made Arcadius his co-Emperor and installed him in Constantinople. In the 15th year he made Honorius co-Emperor and installed him in Rome.

Under Valens Constantinople had been troubled by Arians, who elected a clever and sly Patriarch Demophilus. But the orthodox, those of the true belief,⁶⁸ elected the wise Evagrius, who opposed the Arians. After his arrival Theodosius exiled Demophilus, who had administered his church for thirteen years. He removed all the Arian bishops and recalled the orthodox from exile. He entrusted the Antioch church to Meletius and had Demophilus replaced by Gregory of Nazianze, who was transferred to the imperial city.

48. The fathers and doctors called Gregory

Among the Greeks let us mention:

Gregory Thaumaturgus; Gregory bishop of Nyssa, brother of Basil; Gregory the Theologian, bishop of Nazianze; Gregory who converted the Armenians; In Persia we have Gregory the solitary, who wrote a book on monasticism; Gregory bishop of Nisbis; Gregory the Catholicos, Patriarch of the Orient; Gregory the doctor at Seleucia-Ctesiphon; Gregory of the monastery of Gamra, who wrote a commentary on the Psalms.

⁶⁷ Ar. Sarqis (سرقيس). The story is in Theodoret, Socrates and Sozomen, but Nau thinks this is from a different source.

⁶⁸ The word 'orthodox' may not have been generally understood, hence the gloss.

The story of the Thaumaturgus has already been told.

The bishop of Nyssa was at the Council of the 150, where he spoke the funeral oration of Meletius of Antioch, who had recently died. He finished the Hexameron his brother Basil, wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs and wrote theses on the symbol of the faith. He also commented on the precept of humility, recommended by Our Lord, and other precepts that lead to the kingdom of heaven. He wrote treatises on the creation of man, the soul and the resurrection as well as homilies⁶⁹ for feast days. He has also left us an explanatory text on the Creed and numerous letters. In his eighth dissertation Gregory the Theologian proves his worth and his virtue.

The bishop of Nazianze, who was born there, was first an idolatrous pagan. But his mother was Christian, as he tells us in the discourse written about his brother ...⁷⁰ His mother, when pregnant with him, was one day exposed to danger on the water. She vowed to baptize her son if she were saved. She kept her promise. The young Gregory visited Basil bishop of Caesarea. He acquired Basil's knowledge and walked in the way of the saints. He wrote 49 treatises on various subjects and 153 works on himself and Arianism. He was greatly inspired by the books of Origen, in his time unrivalled as a commentator. Consecrated as bishop of Nazianze, he was transferred to Constantinople. But when he knew that the canons did not allow the transfer of bishops, he returned to Nazianze.

Gregory who taught the Armenians and won them over was Greek. He fled to escape from Diocletian and remained in the mountains of Armenia in the service of God. One day the Patricius⁷¹ of Armenia went out hunting around the cave of Gregory and sacrificed to his gods. He was astonished at the solitary life of Gregory and his asceticism. Another time he went hunting with Wassa the Armenian king, who saw Gregory and asked him to sacrifice to the gods. Gregory refused. He had the saint

69 ^{٦٩} followed closely by the Arabic تراجم (translations/prefaces).

70 critical apparatus note: Furbûs (فربوس) is a badly written version of Caesarius (قزريوس)

71 Title introduced by Constantine to indicate proximity to the imperial family

beaten and thrown into a ditch full of insects. The king, no longer in control of himself, began to tear his clothes and bite him. His wife advised him to remove the saint from the ditch. He had him brought out and asked him to pray for him. After Gregory's prayer he was cured and baptized with his entire household. From that time the king was mentioned in the book of the living in church. Gregory's reputation reached the Greeks. At the request⁷² of Wassa, Leontius of Caesarea, one of the 318, consecrated him bishop of the Armenians. Wassa and Gregory succeeded in Christianizing the whole of Armenia. They built churches and destroyed pagan temples. When Shapur attacked Wassa, the latter cut his army to ribbons, thanks to the prayers of Gregory.

The Armenians at the Council of Chacedon refused to anathematize Severus and his sect. After Gregory's death the belief of the Armenians had been falsified as well as their faith. On Maundy Thursday a lamb was offered, but like the Jews they gave it salt to eat before killing it.

Gregory, who wrote a book on the monastic life, was from Susiane, from the town of Nastir. In his book he tells that a monk had a vision of someone approaching him with a lamb: 'Take this ring. You will be master of the pen and write what pleases you.' After thinking about this he had the idea of writing about the monastic life. He saw the sky open. Our Lord and Saviour was sitting on the seat of His glory, the angelic troops before him. The earth moved and the dead were resurrected. He then awoke and went to Nisibis where he was ill for three months. On the point of dying he saw two angels dressed as monks approach him and cure him. It was like the vision of Origen.⁷³ From Nisibis he went to Edessa. He learned a great deal there and went to live with the saints on Mt Izla. He served them and became one of them. He later entered a monastery in Cyprus. As he did not speak Greek well, he was made gardener. He stayed in this position for two years, but took advantage of his free time to study Greek with his elders. After some time he learned to speak it correctly. The monks appreciated this, but in an attempt to

⁷² The likely meaning of this word, which is usually written مسألة

⁷³ اورغيس

remove him some of his enemies made a fire in the garden that could not be extinguished. Gregory went to one side from them, prayed and made the sign of the cross over the fire, which went out. The monks named him head of the monastery. He ran the monks and monastery successfully. He then left and returned to the island Izla.⁷⁴ Moses the head of the clerics wrote him a letter reproaching him for going to the Greeks. Gregory replied that he had done so on the instructions of God. He said how the archbishop Epiphanius knew of him and was awaiting his arrival. Gregory wrote a book on the religious state in three parts: sermons, his vision and his letters. Some time later he died and was buried in the cave of Mar Eugene. We will speak of the other saints at places reserved for them in this collection.

49. Flavian and his disciple Diodorus

This saint was Byzantine⁷⁵ When Julian forbade the Christians to study philosophy, Flavian disobeyed him and sacrificed himself. Diodorus was first a disciple of the wise and virtuous Sylvanus, bishop of Tarsus. He studied philosophy in-depth and became so knowledgeable that nobody could defeat him in argument. He went to Antioch to combat Arians and in the dispute revealed the perversity of their doctrine. He showed the error of Eunemius, an enemy of the truth, who denied the soul of the Logos born of Mary, claiming that God had no need of a soul. This teaching follows directly from the error of Arius. But Diodorus revealed the error of this heresiarch and the Emperor banished him and his teacher.

One day in Persia Diodorus heard the office sung as prescribed by Ignatius, the disciple of John the Evangelist. He recalled that he had once heard angels sing like this.

He was consecrated bishop of Tarsus. He wrote three books against Manichaeans, three against Arians and one against Macedonius to prove that the Holy Spirit was

⁷⁴ جزيرة, but read: 'mountain' جبل

⁷⁵ رومية

consubstantial with the Father and Son. His best work is the refutation of Apollinarius. He wrote seven books in which he refuted Photinus, Marcellus and Paul of Samosata and proved the divinity of Our Lord against these heresiarchs who claimed that, like everyone else, He was not divine. He proved that Christ was God incarnate Who suffered on the cross in His humanity and rose again from the grave in His divinity, opened the graves and gave back life to the dead, made dark the sun and split open rocks. He wrote almost 80 books in which he uncovered perverse teachings. 55 years separated him from the 318 and the 150 fathers.

As the Arians had much support and were strong under Valens, who favoured them, they inflicted much pain on the fathers and forced them into hiding. But as the Emperor was going out to hunt one day, Diodorus decided to confront him and began to dawdle in front of him. The Emperor did not like this and said to him: 'What is the meaning of this ?' Diodorus replied: 'Virgins well guarded were deep inside their apartments. The house caught fire. They came out of their rooms to put the fire out. Thus, I too was in hiding. But the fire of Arius, lit by the Emperor, is now in the Church of the Lord. I have come out to extinguish it.' This made Valens angry.

When Valens banished Eusebius of Samosata, the latter went to the desert. But each time he heard that Arians had destroyed altars and massacred priests, he disguised himself as a soldier, put on a hairpiece and went to ordain priests and deacons according to the needs of his flock. He was recognized by some Arians. They persuaded a merciless female to hurl a large rock from a high terrace at the bishop's head. As he was dying, he forbade people to take revenge.

When Theodosius gathered the wise and virtuous Isaac, John bishop of ..., ⁷⁶ Timothy of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianze, Diodorus of Tarsus and Philologos of Laodicea to strengthen and confirm the symbol of the faith, they testified to the orthodoxy of Diodorus, the truth of his doctrine, the breadth of his knowledge and the purity of his body. Theodosius was very fond of him and kept

⁷⁶ Lacuna

him at Constantinople. Diodorus lived for such a long time that he became very thin. His skin began to stick to his bones. When he died, Chrysostom composed three funeral orations. Theodoret wrote to the troublesome Cyril on the occasion of his disagreement with Mar Nestorius, when he defamed Diodorus: 'Importunate man, you have more than once inflicted hardship on Diodorus, whom you defamed after his death. Yet you know his virtue, knowledge, what he suffered from his enemies. You know that his sufferings were greater than those of John the Baptist, with whom he was compared by Chrysostom. He overturned Valens, Mani, Arius and all who deviated from the truth. Cyril, if you insult Diodorus, it is because he is dead and buried and because of your opposition to Nestorius who followed his path. But Diodorus did not deviate from the true path or avoid punishment or piercing arrows.'⁷⁷

50. The heretic monks, Simeon, Hermas, Dadoes and Eusebius known as Eustace

At this time a group of monks appeared in monasteries near Edessa. They appeared to follow the ways of Antony and Macarius, but secretly they were opposed to them. They claimed that they had reached such a point of spirituality that the Holy Spirit appeared to them and conversed with them. They prayed and kept vigils unceasingly. They were called Mesallians.⁷⁸ They believed in fact that after twelve years of prayer and fasting they could move mountains. And anyone who, after twelve years, told a mountain to move and it did not obey, showed signs that he had not reached perfection. He had to start over again with his exercises until he reached his goal.

Mar Theodoret says in his book on the religious life that the head of the Mesallian sect was Eusebius, who used to say to his disciples: 'If you keep only the commandment of prayer, you will receive once again the Holy Spirit, as at baptism, and no longer feels the passions of this earth.' The followers of the sect came from

⁷⁷ Cyril was a resolute opponent of Nestorius and had apparently made Diodorus responsible for the Nestorian heresy.

It is interesting that the write becomes so passionate here that he addresses Cyril directly.

⁷⁸ Those who pray.

groups of gymnosophists⁷⁹ and mendicants. The doctrine was combatted by ...⁸⁰ and Diodorus. It was said to come from Beit Garmai, where Eusebius had five disciples. He believed that there was only one God, called Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that the body of Christ was a phantom created by a subtle and spiritual God; that the crucifixion was illusory. He was in favour of common prayer. He believed that dreams came from the Holy Spirit, that there was no benefit in receiving the Eucharist and that the Holy Spirit was with those who did what it said. He did not, however, defend the sins of the flesh. He taught that after the Coming of Christ there would be no defect or sin and that epilepsy was of the Holy Spirit.

51. Basil

On the death of Leontius, one of the 318, Basil was elected bishop of Caesarea. He was imprisoned by Valens for his opposition to Arianism. But the son of the Emperor fell ill. The empress Ruminica set the bishop free and, with her husband, asked him to cure her son. The saint said: 'He will become healthy when he is baptized by the orthodox.' The Emperor did not agree. The child was baptized by Arians and died.

Basil has left us, among other works, a book on the Hexameron, which explains the remarkable psalms of the prophet David, several works on prayer and fasting, work on the monastic rule, letters and polemics with Eunomius.

When Gregory was transferred, at the time of Theodosius, from Constantinople, he was succeeded by Maximus. The latter, at first orthodox, soon became heretical. At the council of the 150 the fathers recognized him for what he was, deposed him and made Nectarius the praetor his successor. It was decided in the council that Constantinople would be second to Rome. Gregory of Nazianze died and was succeeded by Eulalius.

⁷⁹ Presumably of Indian origin or influenced by Indians. They are mentioned in an essay attributed to Ambrose *De Moribus Brahmanorum*

⁸⁰ The text reads: المونابى. Scher suggests Epiphanius.

The brothers of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Peter of Sebaste, followed in his footsteps and attended the council of 150.

52. The heretic Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople

This heresiarch taught that the Holy Spirit had been created. Several bishops gathered together because of him and stated their objections. None was able to change his mind or close his mouth. Having lost their patience they tried to involve Theodore of Mopsuestia, disciple of Diodorus, in their debates, to which they brought him. When Macedonius heard his arguments, he was afraid that Theodore would expose the perversity of his teaching and destroy it. He refused to enter into discussion with them: 'I am Patriarch. I do not discuss with a priest.' The 150 fathers went to the church and made Theodore a bishop that night. As they laid hands on him they said in unison: 'The Holy Spirit has perfected Theodore the priest by consecrating him bishop for the Church of God.' On the following day they summoned him, cross in hand and head covered with veil and mitre. He entered into discussion with Macedonius, defeated him and revealed his perversity and error. The assembly agreed to anathematize and expel him. The hymn 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit with one kingdom only' ⁸¹was composed. This took place about seventy years after the council of the 318 and one hundred years after Ephesus. ⁸² He had formerly taught that the Holy Spirit was not consubstantial, but temporal. He wrote to Antioch not to name the Holy Spirit as consubstantial. The people of Antioch had no bishop. They chose Meletius, a just, pure and orthodox man. Consecrated bishop, he began to preach the consubstantiality of the three: 'We acknowledge and confess three hypostases that have to be worshipped simultaneously because they have the same substance. When we worship the Father and the Son, we also worship the Holy Spirit.' The congregation did not understand.

81 Arabic text seems to be some attempt to render the Syriac.

82 If the preposition is correct (بعد), the dates have to be 395 AD and 531 AD.

He then stretched out his hand: 'Look at my hand, it has only one essence,⁸³ but several names.' He then stretched out three fingers and said: 'These fingers, do they have three substances or one ?' He then folded two of his fingers and left one stretched out and added: 'The essence of the stretched out finger, is it different from the folded fingers ?' The answer was 'no'. He then folded the stretched out finger and unfolded the other two and said: 'Are these two different from the other one ?' 'No, not all.' 'It is the same with the essence of the three hypostases: one essence in the three hypostases.'⁸⁴ As soon as the enemies of truth heard this, they blocked their ears so as not to hear the word that the Holy Spirit had put into the saint's mouth. They made him come down from the pulpit where he was standing, expelled him from the bishopric and removed him from the priesthood. In his place they chose another bishop who favoured their teaching. These heretics, at baptism, would put the head right down to the chest, on the grounds that the seat of the soul is in the head and the heart and that it alone needs purification. The other parts of the body, especially the genitals of men and women, should not be baptized, for they polluted it.

The Emperor had asked Eusebius bishop of Samosata to profess the same doctrine as Macedonius the Patriarch and said to a noble: 'If he does not obey, cut his right hand off.' But the bishop said: 'I will never break the seal of the doctrine entrusted to me by the spiritual fathers unless they break it themselves. Even if all my limbs are hacked off.' When the Emperor heard this, he was full of admiration and gave instructions that he was not to be brought before him again.

53. Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia

The virtues of this sage among scholars, outstanding in virtues that cannot be

⁸³ Ar. جوهـر

⁸⁴ The gifted Briton Patrick, in Ireland, doubtless found the shamrock less cumbersome as a instructional device.

counted ! His incomparable wisdom was inconceivable ! Let us thank God that He gave an unknown genius in arguing and explaining the Scriptures.

He was born in Antioch to rich parents. When he was fifteen, he began studying philosophy and the natural sciences and examining what was written in the books he read in order to explain them. He was guided by the Holy Spirit to become a master of exegesis. He had a keen love of the Holy Spirit, like a lover. He became a disciple of Basil the Great and wanted the monastic life. The monks, however, refused, on the following grounds: he was too young, they did not want to anger his father, the number of monks in the monastery was limited, they wanted to test his belief and patience. But he remained a whole year at the gate of the monastery, tirelessly and unceasingly praising God, reciting Scripture which he then explained. The monks saw his worth and let him in. He stayed for twenty-one years serving the wise and virtuous father Flavian and Mar Diodorus, his knowledge increasing. Inspired by the Holy Spirit that Theodore was an incomparable exegete, these two fathers asked him to write a commentary on the Scripture. He wrote a just and well-reasoned work.

The bishops, his neighbours and those far away, eagerly wished to hear him speak and benefit from his knowledge. Those who had spent time with him were sad to leave.

When Macedonius falsified the true doctrine, claiming that the Holy Spirit had been created and did not have the same essence as the Father and the Son, he asked the fathers to show him the passage of Scripture that affirms that the Holy Spirit is eternal and consubstantial with the Father. If they could not find it, they would have to profess his doctrine. Nobody could find any proof that would alleviate the distress of their soul. They all went to Theodore and begged him to elucidate the matter, to relieve them and let the congregation see the shining light of truth. Macedonius and his followers realized this, and withdrew their challenge to avoid embarrassment. They refused to discuss the matter with Theodore on the grounds

that he was a mere priest. By common consent Theodore was consecrated bishop.

Then the saint went to a city where he found an idol, named Mopsos. The city was named after it and was called Mopsuestia. As he entered the city he was seized by some who said: 'You have to worship our god whom we can see. While you invite us to worship your crucified god, he performs miracles and prodigies for us.' The saint was polite to them and not afraid of them. When they saw that he was repulsing their invitation to worship, they tried to place the idol in the inner part of the altar. A high structure in front concealed the idol. The saint went up to the altar, but he smelt a foul smell and envisaged a horrible image of the idol. He began to pray and made a sign of the cross on the wall. The wall split into two and the idol leant out, turned towards the saint, who snatched it and hurled it into the fire. Most people in the city converted.

More spectacular prodigies were performed by him: a Jew used to go to listen to his sermons and wanted to be baptized. One day, unable to go, he died suddenly. After his burial, the saint learned of this and was distressed that he had not baptized him sooner. Trusting in God he went the grave with some people. He prostrated himself and began to pray to Our Lord to resurrect the Jew and purify him for baptism in the name of the consubstantial Trinity. He then ordered the body to be exhumed. The dead man arose and walked out of the burial pit. The saint had water brought and baptized him: 'Do you want to return to the grave and its peace or remain on earth with its troubles ?' The Jew preferred death to life. Theodore blessed him, the dead man went to sleep, the saint buried him and left.

Nobody can properly describe the extraordinary virtues of this saint. Cyril, before combatting the virtuous Nestorius, said: 'Theodore is like pure gold.' But overcome by a demon the same Cyril went back on his word, like a dog returning to his vomit.⁸⁵ When he reached the exegesis of passage in the Epistles of Paul: 'Are we not allowed to eat and drink or associate with a sister who serves us like the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord and Cephas ?' The saint thought that, in the testimony of some, Paul was putting his word into practice. Immediately after this

⁸⁵ Prov. 26,11

thought, the Holy Spirit deprived him of grace. He could no longer explain a word or find any sense in it. He then gave himself up to fasting and vigils, praying to God to restore to him the grace that he had lost. Overcome by grief, he prostrated himself on the ground and took refuge in the grave of the virtuous Thecla, who had accompanied the apostles on their travels, performing miracles and baptizing women. He threw himself on the tomb and asked her to pray to Paul to forgive the error he had committed in spirit. In a dream he saw seated on a chair next to the grave a venerable old man with white hair and of remarkable beauty. He also saw the saint standing beside him, begging him to release Theodore. 'After long prayers, said Theodore, the old man came up to me and blessed my heart and gave me 14 keys, saying: "These keys open any lock." I then woke up and everything I wanted was open to me, and I had ideas that I had never had before and wrote a commentary on the 14 epistles of Paul.'

Theodosius considered himself fortunate when he saw Theodore was able to give a reasoned explanation to all the difficult questions he posed. He therefore asked Theodore to write a commentary on the Epistles. Alipha⁸⁶ asked him to write a commentary on the Pentateuch, which he did in three volumes. Babai⁸⁷ asked him to write a commentary on Samuel and Cedron one on David, which he did in three volumes. He also wrote commentaries on the twelve prophets, at the request of Mar Touba⁸⁸: on Ecclesiastes for Marphoria;⁸⁹ Acts of the Apostles for Eusia;⁹⁰ Epistle to the Romans for Athanasius;⁹¹ Corinthians for Theodore; Second Corinthians and Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians for Tartalis;⁹² the two Thessalonians for James; the two to Philemon and Hebrews for Hendatus,⁹³ for whom he also wrote a treatise on perfection and the priesthood. Maurice⁹⁴ asked him to write a commentary on Timothy. Others asked him for various

86 Scher's note: Alphaeus (all refs to Assemani *Bib. Or.* III I p.30)

87 Scher's note: Mamarianus

88 Scher's note: Pyrius

89 Scher's note: Porphyrius

90 Scher's note: Basil. Arabic: الافراكيس

91 Scher's note: Eusebius

92 Scher's note: Eustratius

93 Scher's note: Eusebius

94 Scher's note: Peter

commentaries. He interpreted the Book of Job, the Gospels and explained the symbol of the 318 and the Mass; the subjects of his books are the humanity of Jesus, the perfect way, refuting those who think that sin inheres in human nature, the Holy Spirit, the priesthood, refuting the Magi, letters called 'pearls', refuting Eumenius ⁹⁵and Apollinarius, the Antichrist, letter to a renegade, exposition of the Arian doctrine and an attack on those who see only the parabolic side when reading books. He refused no request and never wrote without producing a perfect explanation. His commentaries are on the Gospels, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel. He wrote a book refuting all attempts at novelty, filled with such excellent things that he called it the Book of Pearls, because it resembles well-ordered precious pearls. This was the achievement of 55 years of study devoted to explaining the Scriptures and fighting heretics. When God called him, he was buried near the blessed Thecla.

Theodore had many disciples, including: John Patriarch of Antioch, Alexander bishop of Maboug, Flavian Patriarch of Constantinople, Mar Nestorius also Patriarch of Constantinople, Theodore of Cyrus, Meletius his successor in Mopsuestia. As for Mares bishop of Trabeh and Malkraus bishop of ...⁹⁶ The angels could be heard at the moment when the saint gave up his soul ...⁹⁷

54. Mar Ephrem the Syrian prophet

According to the account of Simeon of Samosata, who was a disciple of Ephrem from boyhood to old age, Ephrem's father was from Nisibis and his mother from Amid. His father's name was Mishaq, a priest of Abizal. His father was angry that his son was in the service of a Christian called John. He struck his son, saying: 'The god I serve, I serve him for your sake. I ask him to forgive your errors, to increase your worth and extend your name, while you follow the error of the Christians.' The

⁹⁵ Scher's note: Eunemius

⁹⁶ Lacuna

⁹⁷ See text in PO 4 section 26. Extracts of his life can be found in C. Brockelmann *Syrische Grammatik* (1905). 23-43.

devil spoke to his servant from inside the idol: 'I see that you serve me devotedly. You have been addressing prayers to me on his behalf, but I have no chance of possessing him. He is the enemy of me and people like me.' The wicked father said to his blessed son: 'Remove yourself from me and go where you will. You have angered the gods with your hostility, injustice and impiety.' Mar Ephrem was glad when he heard this. He took the opportunity to go to the church, where he was baptized at the age of eighteen. The saint who baptized him taught him the Psalms. When Christian persecutions began, Ephrem left for Amid and withdrew to Edessa. A monk saw him and said: 'Go into a monastery and learn the monastic rule.' He went and put himself in the service of an aged monk, who was very ascetic. He stayed with him for a year.

Some people of learning say that Mar Ephrem was dull and unable to retain anything he had learned. When the children were reading and learning to memorize, they made fun of him and said: 'Tell us something that we may hear it.' Ephrem became sad, wept and prayed to God unceasingly that He might open his intelligence and disperse the clouds of darkness. One day, as he was going to draw water for his master, he saw very clean water trickling out of a rock. He looked up and said: 'Lord, I beg you by the power that has worn down this rock and the goodness that has made this stone wet to water the dryness of my heart, mollify the hardness of my spirit and open up my intelligence to spread knowledge of You and make it well-known among Your creatures so that they may be moved to love and obey and You.' That night Ephrem saw angels come down from heaven, holding a book written on both sides⁹⁸ and heard the say to each other: 'To whom should this book be given ' Some replied: 'Ephrem, for he will learn ...'⁹⁹

Basil sent to this individual¹⁰⁰ to tell Ephrem to attend him. Basil's envoy took him by the hand and said to him: 'Come with me to the Patriarch.' Ephrem: 'I am a poor man covered in nothing but a bundle of rags of hideous appearance. The Patriarch

98 Seems to suggest a papyrus roll on which writing is visible on the horizontal and vertical fibres.

99 Critical apparatus: 'document is damaged': هنا ورقة ساقطة

100 شخص

is splendid, dressed in silk and purple. What does he want with me ?' The servant took him by force and led him to the Patriarch, who greeted him deferentially, while Ephrem lowered his head and dared not raise it. The Patriarch said: 'My brother, who are you ? Where do you come from ? Tell me about yourself. I saw two angels clothed in garments of fire put a similar garment on you and place themselves at your side. I heard you say twice: 'Good.'¹⁰¹ But I was speaking in Greek. How did you understand me. You look like a Syrian.' Ephrem said: ' I am a foreigner and poor. You are a wealthy and powerful prince. Let me go.' Basil inclined his head: 'I will not raise my head again until you tell me who you are. I beg you, by Christ Our Lord, Who has given you this dignity and virtue, to tell me who you are.' Basil insistently begged him. Because Ephrem did not understand Greek, he wept and said: 'I am Ephrem the Syrian.' Basil threw himself about his neck, embraced him closely and covered him with kisses. He then dismissed his attendants and withdrew with Ephrem. 'Why did you say εὖ twice when you do not understand Greek ? People usually say it only once.' Ephrem replied: 'I saw the Holy Spirit in the form a white dove whisper in your ear what your tongue pronounced.' Basil said: ' Mar Ephrem, if you were Basil and I had been Ephrem, I would assuredly have seen what God has made you worthy of and what He has destined you for.'

Basil happily spent several days with him. But it happened that a large number of people gathered around them. Basil began to preach on the six days of creation, with such eloquence that his audience was astonished. Ephrem felt great joy and wondered at the spirituality of his words. He later made his farewell and departed for Edessa.

On his way he was overcome by a group of heretics, who entered into a discussion with him. He scattered them, tore up their books and refuted their arguments. But there was a bold young man among them. He struck Ephrem so hard that he fell to the ground. After recovering he resumed his journey. The heretics were not far away when a large viper bit the young man who had struck Ephrem. He was in such pain

¹⁰¹ εὖ

that some of his companions ran to Ephrem and begged him to have pity on this ignoramus and the weakness of his poor mother. Ephrem went with them and by the time he arrived, the young man was dead. He prostrated himself and prayed for a long time that God would display His goodness and power to those who obeyed Him. He made the sign of the cross, took his hand, resurrected him and rejoined him with his companions. He then wept over their great impiety. Many converted to the true faith.

On entering Edessa Ephrem found nine different doctrines, one of them true, the others faulty. He combatted the adherents of these doctrines. He was zealous against the followers of Mani, Arius, and Bardesan. He combatted and confounded them.

When he became Patriarch Basil sent friends to find Ephrem. He wanted to consecrate him bishop of one of the provinces: 'If you find a man clothed in rags, short, bald, big head, short beard, try to bring him here to me. Make sure he does not run away.' When they arrived in Edessa, the messengers asked about Ephrem. They were taken to him. When Ephrem saw them, he knew why they had come. He took a loaf of bread, threw a heap of rags retrieved from a garbage dump around his shoulder. He began to run in the streets, biting the loaf. The messengers saw him and thought he was mad. They dismissed him: 'He is mad. We should not bring him before the Patriarch. He would make us feel ashamed if we brought him someone like this.' They left and went back to the Patriarch and told him of the unworthy condition of this man. He said: 'Idiots ! morons ! A pearl of great value has escaped you. You have lost a mine of learning and knowledge.'

There is much to say about his virtues and extensive knowledge. The poems he wrote are plaintive, humble, pious, and touching. Their sadness surpasses the lamentations of Jeremiah. He had no time for secular things. His tenderness and humility urged him to decline the honours of the mighty, of which he was quite worthy. He ate only barley bread and salt. His attire was made up of rags from

waste dumps. He was only a deacon when he might have been the greatest of Patriarchs, most worthy of the honour and estimation of his fellow man. In a word, his knowledge surpassed that of all the scholars and his wisdom that of all the sages. The monastic life he led, his morals and passion for prayer cannot be described. Hnanisho' bar Sroshoi, bishop of Hîra, in his praise: 'Ocean of knowledge, who can describe the abundance of your treasures ? Mine of treasures, who can describe the beauty of your words ? Who does think of being silent when your name is spoken in a gathering ? Who does not beg God with great passion not to give him what He gave you ? Who does not recall how charitable God has been to you and does not hope for divine mercy ? Let the scholars be silent. Let Ephrem speak. Let the orators remain silent from astonishment and fear. Let Ephrem make his voice hear and intoxicate us with his sublime word.'

It is said in certain histories that Bardesanes¹⁰² composed a gospel that disagreed with that of Our Lord, that he seduced spirits whose faith was broken and intelligence suffered from doubt. He corrupted the hearts of many people with his gospel. When he died, the Church was released from him and his wickedness. Ephrem tried to get hold of the book and asked his sister, who promised it to him. But the devil, the friend of corruption persuaded her to try to seduce Ephrem. Ephrem said to her: 'First, give me the book and I will sleep next to you as you wish.' She said: 'Swear by Christ that you will do this and give it back to me after you have read it.' He promised. She gave him the book. He took it and glued all the pages together and pressed them firmly together. He then took his cloak and went out into the street with her. In broad daylight he stretched his cloak on the street and said: 'I am yours. Lie down here so that I can fulfil my promise.' She said: 'Is there anyone in the world who would perform the conjugal act with his wife in public, let alone another woman ?' The saint said to her: 'So, you are unable to consent. I have kept my promise. You are the one who wishes to renounce it.' She left. God had triumphed over the devil.

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55. Luliana, son of Barmala

This man imitated Ephrem by clothing himself like Ephrem. He wore the girdle of truth and justice, ate only plants like Elijah, who received his food from a crow. Like Elijah he lived in the Carmel valley and on the riverbank. This man saw a vision of Julian the Apostate, the criminal who declared war on Christ and asked the devil for troops to annihilate the faithful. For sixteen days he prayed with unceasing fervour to Our Lord and Saviour. He begged Him to display His power against his enemy, to protect the Christians and avert the persecution planned by Julian. He never stopped praying and talking to the Lord so that He would strike the Apostate with an arrow of vengeance and deliver His flock from persecution. When he was old and feeble, he withdrew to a widow with an only child. He received hospitality and ate with her. The devil, enemy of good works, enviously planned to afflict and harm him. He threw the boy into a deep well. The mother began to cry: 'My son is dead. I have lost my only child.' The saint was not disturbed because he hoped, with the help of God, to save the child. He went to the well, but the child was entirely submerged. The saint made the sign of the cross of Christ, Whose law he had always followed, and the water spewed up the boy as the sea had spewed up the axe, thanks to the prayer of Elisha.¹⁰³ St Luliana stretched forth his hand retrieved the smiling child from the clutches of death. The boy was asked why he was smiling: 'I was at the bottom of the well. This old man here, I saw him smiling as he stretched out his hand and pulled me out of the water. When I saw him smiling, I began to smile too.'

These are just some of the incidents of the saint's life. May his prayers help to protect us and deliver us from evil.

56. Epiphanius the archbishop

This remarkable man was originally a Jew. When his father died, he left him his entire patrimony, a donkey. His mother was still alive when he found himself

¹⁰³² Kings 6, 1ff.

obliged to sell the animal. He took it market to sell it. Young Epiphanius was very astute. The buyers tried to drive the price down, but an honest monk saw him and took pity on him. God revealed to the monk what the boy was one day to become. He bought the animal for 4 gold pieces, which he weighed and gave the donkey back to Epiphanius: 'Spend this money to support your mother and yourself. Keep the animal.' The young man was astonished at the conduct of the monk and went away happy. When the money had gone, he once again had to sell the donkey. He took it to market where he met the monk and told him what had happened. 'I see that you are intelligent and astute. Why do you not become a Christian ?' 'I will not abandon the worship of One God, the Law of Moses and the prophets to follow a God in three persons, one of whom was crucified and buried.' The monk said to him: 'Shall I show you the power of the crucifixion ?' When Epiphanius agreed, the monk called the donkey: 'In the name Christ killed by the Jews, die instantly.' The animal died and Epiphanius burst into tears. The monk asked him not to cry but recite over the dead animal any words you like from Moses or the prophets. If the animal arises, you are right to adhere to Judaism. The boy read from the Pentateuch and the prophets until he could read no more. The animal remained motionless. The monk then said: 'In the name of Christ crucified by the Jews, arise.' The donkey arose instantly. When the boy saw this miracle, he took the animal back to his mother. She died some time later. He buried her and returned to the monk, who baptized him, removing the stain of Judaism and converting him from falsehood to truth. The young man left and went to live in solitude, living a life of severe mortification and entering a monastery. God granted him knowledge of secrets and the power to perform miracles. One day a caravan was passing by. It had wine but no water. The virtuous Epiphanius, seeing the distress of those in the caravan, made the sign of the cross over the jars containing the wine and turned it into the purest water. The caravan quenched its thirst and the animals were watered. But one jar remained unopened. When it was opened, it was found to contain wine. Our Lord converted water into wine and his disciple wine into water.

When the saint's reputation began to spread, he was chosen for a bishopric. After

his consecration, he performed more miracles. One of his flock was a moneylender who had become very rich. The saint forbade him to practise usury, but he did not listen. Some time later he used his money to buy wheat, which he put into several vessels. The saint made the sign of the cross over the vessels and they were shipwrecked. The bishop thanked God for this, for having purified the usurer's house of injustice. News of the shipwreck spread at the same time as the man of God was praising heaven.

He had an archdeacon whose conduct was bad. The bishop had ordered him several times to improve his behaviour, but he refused. The bishop became stricter, and the archdeacon began to plot his death but was unsuccessful. One day a crow appeared and began to crow. To provoke the bishop the archdeacon asked him what it meant. 'He is announcing death before the celebration of the Mass,' was the reply. And the archdeacon died before the holy sacrifice. The bishop then went to Jerusalem,¹⁰⁴ where people were suffering from a great famine. He asked the Patriarch to lend him vessels of gold and silver that he might offer to others like them. The Patriarch lent them to him. He sold them and spent the money on alleviating the plight of the widows and orphans. After some time the Patriarch demanded the return of the vessels and finally excommunicated the bishop, who made the sign of the cross and rendered the Patriarch blind. He then said to the poor, to whom he had given the money: 'I trust that Christ will enrich you again and you can pay back the Patriarch.' This in fact happened, and they were able to repay the Patriarch what they had taken from him.

Epiphanius was bishop for thirty five years. His was a spiritual life, albeit imprisoned in a corporeal shell. Every time he baptized, ordained a priest or deacon or consecrated a bishop, the Holy Spirit could be seen hovering about his work.

57. The martyrs and eminent people of this time

¹⁰⁴Arabic name: بتت المقدس

Damasus of Rome; Ambrose of Milan; Basil of Caesarea; Didymus the Blind, the Alexandrian logician, who fought the Arians; the two martyrs Miles and Qardah; Gregory of Nyssa; Rabban Sallita, buried at Awana opposite Balad, at the place known as al Duweir; Jovian the pious Emperor; Macarius the ascete, who spent sixty years in the desert of Egypt; Macarius of Alexandria; their companions exiled by Valens, Emperor of the Romans; Peter the brother of Cyprian, who was more ascetic and knowledgeable than him ; Cyprian bishop of Africa, the lord of Haraz; Anba Evagrius the monk, disciple of Oulogos, whose feast is the 27th November.

58. The Patriarch Tûmarsâ, the 12th Catholicos

The Church remained without a head from the 39th year of Shapur until the accession of Bahrâm. Shapur had in fact prevented the nomination of another Catholicos after the martyrdom of Barba'shemin. But under Bahrâm Tûmarsâ the Nabatean showed himself devoted and zealous for the truth. He was consecrated Catholicos. He patiently tolerated the persecution unleashed on him by the Magi, consecrated bishops and sent them abroad. He himself undertook pastoral work throughout the country. He constructed new churches and restored old ones to their former splendour with the help of his servant Bakhtisho', who was later martyred. After eight years as Patriarch Tûmarsâ died.

59. Bahrâm surnamed Farmânshâh

At the time of Theodosius, Bahrâm son of Shapur, surnamed Farmânshâh, ascended the throne of Persia. He resolved to avenge his father. At the beginning of his reign he was beneficent and kind to the poor. Once assured of power he ordered the lords of his kingdom to build walls and citadels at their own expense. He put his servant Bakhtisho' to death for his faith in Christ. The subjects of his empire quickly felt the yoke that he placed upon them. They plotted his death. One

day, when out with a servant walking on the hill adjoining the land of Daskart. he was followed by soldiers and realized their intention. As he was strong, he asked his servant for an arrow to shoot at them. But the soldiers managed to wait for him and kill him on this hill. He was on the throne for ten years and eighteen days.

60. Rabban Mar 'Abdâ of Deir Qonî

He was from Deir Qonî. His mother was immoral. It is a wonder that such a debauched woman gave birth to a saint. As with Jephthah, who saved the Israelites from Ammon.¹⁰⁵ From his birth 'Abdâ was thrown at the church by his mother. Christians took care of him and brought him up. He did well in the village school. He was ordained priest and built a large monastery and a comprehensive school,¹⁰⁶ where every subject was taught. At that time there was no other monastery in the land of the Nabat. It was a successful school, with 60 alumni, including Ahai and Yâbâlâhâ, each one of whom was Catholicos. Mar 'Abdâ was well-known for his purity. He travelled the country incessantly, baptizing Aramaeans. He then went to the village of Tella, near the river Serser, and left the monks of Sliba.

One day, the students¹⁰⁷ in the monastery ran out of bread. He took a little and blessed it, like his Master, and fed them with it for two days, as well as guests. On the third day the faithful sent them flour.

Mar 'Abdâ did not eat cooked food for seven years. He ate dry bread and ashes.¹⁰⁸ One day when he was crossing Seleucia-Ctesiphon he was seized by the Magi and imprisoned, but escaped from prison with God's help.

The Marcionites had spread their magic among Christians. Mar 'Abdâ reconverted

¹⁰⁵ Judges 1: 1-11

¹⁰⁶I can hardly resist using this 'English' term, which was introduced in the UK in the 1960s. It is of course an anachronism.

¹⁰⁷Arabic form of the Greek: الاسكولانيين

¹⁰⁸Possibly left over from the baking process.

them. The students of his felt no need to go to Edessa. The Marcionites were constantly trying to kill him. But their plots were foiled by Almighty God. The Catholicos Ahai wrote of the life of the saint that it was distinguished by its virtues.

61. The Monastery of Sliba

When the churches in Persia were destroyed and Christians massacred, a cross rose up on the earth in the form of a tree. It happened near a village called Tella on the Serser.

A similar thing happened in the time of Claudius and his wife Christa.¹⁰⁹ This miracle was to frustrate the Jews who wished to hide the cross. But the cross revived a dead man. The Magi were astonished at this. They tried in vain to conceal the miracle. This was told to a Christian called Sliba son of Usia, headman of the region. He bought the land and built a sanctuary on the site of the apparition. Monks flocked there from all over. Sliba took charge of the community. The place was called the monastery of Sliba. People in the Nabatean countries heard of it.

Mar 'Abdâ, founder of the school of Deir Qonî, went to the site, performed miracles and converted many. He taught that there was no reason to doubt that a cross could emerge from the ground and pointed to the parallel that had happened in the time of Constantine three hundred years after the Jews had secreted the cross. The image of the cross appeared in the sky, at the time of the savage persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian. When Helena had the cross dug up, it exuded a pleasant fragrance. Daniel son of Maryam relates that a luminous cross appeared for several days while the blessed Barshabâ was being martyred. Another cross appeared on the cross on which Nathaniel was martyred. A myrtle tree appeared in the spot where Aithâlâhâ¹¹⁰ was martyred. The sick of Nuhadra took pieces of it and recovered their health. Five years later the Magi, having heard of it, cut it down. In this way God let

¹⁰⁹ Footnote: Protonice

¹¹⁰ The text reads: Yâbâlâhâ (يابالاه)

the cross appear during the Persian domination in which many Christians were killed in order to strengthen the hearts of the Christians and the belief of the faithful throughout the empire.

62. 'Abdisho', who built a monastery near Hîra

Saint 'Abdisho', from a village called Arpheluna in Maisan, went to Deir Qonî, near Mar 'Abdâ. His study at school was extensive. One day, he went to the Tigris to draw water, which was far from the monastery. The descent to the river was not easy. He found women drawing water. They implored him to fill their jars, and he did. Back in the monastery Mar 'Abdâ reproved him for having taken so long. 'Abdisho' told him why. Mar 'Abdâ then said: 'If you do things because people implore you, I implore to go and stand in the middle of this oven.' The blessed 'Abdisho' made the sign of the cross over his body and the fire and went into the oven and stood there in the sight of all the others. The flames abated forthwith and consumed none of his garments. Following this miracle, he fled from the monastery and returned to his native country. He built a monastery there, which many joined. His family and relatives came to visit him all the time. For this reason he left the monastery and went to Baksaya, near the village of Beit 'Arbi. Bahrâm Farmânshâh, on his way back from Seleucia-Ctesiphon, passed by the village and was struck by the respect shown by so many for the saint, who also left this place and withdrew to Maisan where he Christianized Rimiun and the neighbouring country,

His fame reached the Catholicos Tûmarsâ, who consecrated him bishop of Deir Mukhrâq. The people of the province were rebels. 'Abdisho' brought them back to the right path by his kindness and good administration. Later they maltreated him. He left them his cape and his stick and one night left for the island of Yamâma¹¹¹ and

¹¹¹ The capital of Bahrain, on the northern tip of the island, is called المنامة

Bahrain. He led a solitary life there and baptized the inhabitants. He then built a monastery there. One day, a person possessed by the devil was brought to him and he cured the person. The demon said: 'You have driven me out ? Where do you want me to go ?' The saint gave him a stone and told him to go the deserts of the son of Isma'il. The demon did so and, on his return, told the saint: 'I took the stone where you told me and put it three miles from the town of Hîra at the entrance to the desert.' 'Abdisho' said: 'Stay here until I have checked what you say.' That night he had a vision to go to the place and build a monastery there. The saint left the island known today as Ramath, 18 parasangs from Ubila and made for Hîra, where he built a monastery. His fame spread far and wide and people began to gather around him. The demon meanwhile remained imprisoned on the island. People hear him crying out: ' Lord, is he not coming ? How long do I have to stay here ?' The saint then returned to his monastery at Maisan to baptize his children. It was there that he died.

63. Qayuma, 13th Catholicos

Tûmarsâ was succeeded as Catholicos by Qayuma in the ninth year of Bahrâm. Heu was old, but despite his age and feebleness he continued to administer his pastoral duties until the accession of the impious Yazdgerd. He chose Isaac, relative of Tûmarsâ, as Catholicos in his place. And, by agreement with the fathers and the faithful, he left the administration to him.

Qayuma kept to his cell: 'As God gives his subjects peace and shelters them from exile and peace, one should entrust the management of their affairs to a younger man who is able to direct and govern them as is fitting.' He died in the third year of Yazdgerd.

64. Arcadius and Honorius

Theodosius was succeeded by his sons Arcadius and Honorius. They managed the empire miraculously well and followed their father. They were baptized by Epiphanius bishop of Cyprus and brought up by Abba Arsenius, famed for his worth and virtue.

Epiphanius was born a Jew, but God chose him as He had chosen Paul and surrounded him with a blinding light. He was baptized at the age of seventeen and at sixty he was consecrated bishop. He wrote treatises, homilies on prayer and fasting. He died aged 115. He had a companion called Natira, disciple of Silvanus, who lived near Mount Sinai. Timothy bishop of Alexandria, consecrated Natira bishop of Oxyrhynchus¹¹² When he was living alone, Natira took some care of his body. But after becoming a bishop his life became more austere. His disciple wanted to know why. 'When I was in the desert, I took care of my body that it might not become ill. But now that I am back in the world, I must mortify my flesh so as not to succumb to the numerous temptations.' The saint joined Epiphanius in curing the sick and expelling demons.

Abba Arsenius was related to Theodosius. He had a thousand servants and a large fortune. But he continually asked God to show him the way to live. One day at home he heard a voice from heaven: 'Arsenius, flee from man and you will live.' So he left everything he had and withdrew to the desert of Egypt. He had a fine figure and long beard. When he entered the church, he placed himself behind a column to escape the attention of others. On Saturday evening he stood in the church, with his back to the sun and hands to heaven. He remained like this, without moving, until Sunday. Because of fatigue his skin became dessicated on his bones. His eyelashes fell out. But his face shone like that of an angel. He was finally struck by an illness in the desert and was too feeble to do anything. Our Lord, in His goodness, let him leave this transient world and occupy one of the best places in the world to come.

¹¹² The Coptic version, published by Marius Chaîne *Le manuscrit de la version copte* (1960), also contains this story (no. 62), in which the monk is named [ΝΙ]ΤΙΡΑ and described as a disciple of Silvanus in Sinai. He later became bishop of ΦΑΡΑΝ. Oxyrhynchus is not mentioned.

He was 112 when he died: 40 years on the throne, 60 in the desert and hills of Egypt, 10 near Alexandria and 2 in Troa, where he died. May his prayers protect the faithful.¹¹³

65. King Yazdgerd

Bahrâm¹¹⁴ was succeeded by the impious Yazdgerd, his brother. He made a treaty with the Romans and married the daughter of the king of the Hephtaristes. He then looked for his brother's killer. He was unyielding with the princes in his kingdom and tried to humiliate them. Some of his friends advised him against this: 'The building cannot stand without a foundation. You have maltreated the princes in your kingdom and thus made them bitter rather than joyful. What do you hope to achieve?' The king replied: 'You have killed two kings, so you deserve this treatment. If you follow the right path, I will be more considerate.' His subjects were suitably fearful of him and his authority was reinforced.

66. Isaac, 14th Catholicos

This father was good, virtuous, knowledgeable, merciful, a miracle-worker, devoted to prayer and fasting. He managed the affairs of his people well. Arcadius, Emperor of the Romans, learned of the Christian persecution in Persia and wrote to Yazdgerd: ¹¹⁵'If God has placed royal power in our hands, it is not so that we can secure our own personal well-being but so that we can govern with justice, chastize the oppressor and reward benefactors according to their merit. You do not worship God, but still He has allotted to you a large enough kingdom. He has submitted his creatures to you. He has raised you to the throne. It is therefore not right the Christians of your empire be so maltreated, robbed and and killed. If it is true that this happens most of the time without your knowledge, it is no less true that your

¹¹³ The reader is advised to consult the long footnote on p. 315 of *P0* 5.

¹¹⁴ Possibly Bahram IV d. 399

¹¹⁵ According to J.W. Drijvers in c. 29 of the *Companion to Late Antiquity* (ed. P. Rousseau) Arcadius in his will made Yazdgerd I the guardian of his son. The book seems to lack pagination and this statement lacks a reference.

people do this always with the aim of pressuring them and taking what belongs to them. Know that this makes God angry with you and people hateful of you. In fact, when men come to know what happens to their fellows, they disapprove and find it monstrous. Those people would find it more profitable to pursue the enemy and introduce reform into the empire.' He then asked him to show greater favour to Christians to stop the persecution and allow them to rebuild their churches.

The letter was brought to Yazdgerd, who was sick, by Marûtha bishop of Maiferqat. It was sent with him by the Emperor in the hope of making him feel better. Yazdgerd felt great joy when he received the letter, replied to what he asked and sent him gifts. The persecution came to an end and there was peace. Yazdgerd then wrote to Isaac the Catholicos to calm and reassure him.

Isaac benefited from the presence of Marûtha to convene a synod to organize the eastern church, like the one that had happened in the west. Marûtha presented the letters of the western bishops to Yazdgerd, in which they asked him to convene the bishops and metropolitans at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Yazdgerd agreed and was happy with the agreement between the two empires. He then wrote to his people and told them to send their provincial bishops to Seleucia-Ctesiphon. In the eleventh year of his reign¹¹⁶ at Christmas 40 metropolitans assembled at Seleucia. The letter of the western bishops was read aloud, and they accepted it immediately. In the presence of the fathers Isaac and Marûtha drew up 22 canons for the needs of the Church. And all, of their own free will, gave their agreement, signed the canons and decreed that it was necessary to conform with them in future. Thus, schism was avoided and peace re-established. Isaac died in year 12 of Yazdgerd. He has been Patriarch for eleven years.

67. John Chrysostom

116 410 AD

Nectarius was Patriarch of Constantinople for 17 years. When he died, Arcadius summoned a man called John 'Golden Mouth' because of his eloquence to be Patriarch. He was a relative of Theodore of Mopsuestia. He embraced the monastic life in a monastery near Antioch, the home of Flavian and Diodorus the exegete.

He studied with Diodorus and Libanius the philosopher. Then he lived in a cave for four years. He wrote two volumes of commentary on Matthew, two on John and an exegesis on the Pauline letters. His commentaries were didactic. He wrote homilies on feastdays and the priesthood. He wrote other texts remonstrating with heretics. He was as zealous as the prophet Elijah. He attracted the enmity and displeasure of the empress Eudoxia because he had accused her of having confiscated a vineyard belonging to a widow and called her the second Jezabel.

Theophilus of Alexandria and his nephew Cyril, who later succeeded his uncle, were envious of Chrysostom and planned an attack on him. They gathered 29 bishops who accused him of relying on the works of Origen, because he was continually reading and explaining them. They persuaded the Emperor to exile him. And he sent Chrysostom to Cappadocia. This caused a lot of trouble, and Chrysostom was recalled. Chrysostom continued berating the empress and compared her to Herodias. When she discovered this, she complained to Theophilus and other bishops inimical to John. They deposed and excommunicated him. Epiphanius bishop of Cyprus signed the excommunication order. He was then condemned and sent to the Pontus. He had been Patriarch for six years. After entering the religious life he did not swear or taste wine. He said that Epiphanius would not reach home alive, and Epiphanius said that he would not return from exile. In fact, Epiphanius died on the way to Cyprus.¹¹⁷

Theodore of Mopsuestia was informed of what had happened to John. He wrote to Arcadius a fine letter in favour of the persecuted bishop. But Arcadius was

¹¹⁷ In some ways the whole episode seems somewhat unedifying. It is intriguing that these holy men seem to be as prone as anyone else to feelings of spite and resentment.

prevented by his wife from agreeing to support John, who wrote to thank Theodore. John died two years later in exile.

68. Story Yâbâlâhâ the monk, elected Catholicos

At the school of Mar 'Abdâ there was a virtuous man called Yâbâlâhâ, the 'gift of God'. He was an excellent student, outstripping his fellows. Near the monastery of Mar Ezekiel the prophet was a village called Daskart d'Abisho', whose inhabitants had been converted by the wise schola Mar 'Abdâ. They asked him to send them someone to explain what they needed. Yâbâlâhâ went to them and built a large monastery. But he preferred the solitary life and withdrew to another convent on the banks of the Tigris. The brothers heard of this and people began to flock to him. He divided them into three groups, ordering each group to sing the seven canonical hours for one hour and not to withdraw until they had finished. The following group was to continue so that the prayer was never interrupted, in order to imitate the angels. When the first group had left, some of the brothers were to go the 'Saturday house',¹¹⁸ others to reading and teaching house, others to attend pilgrims, while others were able to rest. Then they went back to prayer, and they were followed by another group, always in the same order. Mar 'Abdâ took care to visit them at the appointed times and monitor their exercises.

About this time there was no rain. The locals asked Yâbâlâhâ, who prayed and it began to rain. On his way back to Persia Yazdgerd passed by the place and was surprised to see so many people there.

Among the philosophers and scholars of the time at Rome. Alexandria and Cyprus there was a certain Nemesius. He professed the philosophy of the ancients, but was baptized by Athanasius and began to combine philosophy and Christianity. He fought Valens and Claudius his general. He took an oath to do nothing. But they

¹¹⁸ Nau: the kitchen.

unleashed a storm of evil against him, which he bore with patience. He was then exiled to Siwa,¹¹⁹ where Nestorius had been exiled. After four years he returned home.

At Edessa there was a Mar Aba who struggled against Maximus the Arian and revealed his errors. Porphyrius of Antioch wrote a book on the faith and confirmed the belief of the 318. With his help and that of Acacius of Amid, the Catholicos Isaac and Marûtha pronounced the canons relevant to the East. There was also Theophilus of Alexandria, Diodorus of Tarsus, John Chrysostom, Epiphanius of Cyprus. Some time earlier there was Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote on the divine apparition, the portrait of the world, a church history, chronicle, a work on the depositions against Christ and the cessation of rainfall. He rejected orthodox belief, but was converted by Silvester of Rome, who converted Constantine and many Romans. There was also Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria, who anathematized Arius. His pupil Athanasius succeeded him and has left several books. In the East there was Isaac the Catholicos, but before him Mar Ephrem had written books on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Job, the Prophets, Epistles of Paul, Bariamin.¹²⁰ He also refuted Haphtus and Bardesanes. He explained the Diatessaron, refuted the Jews and left us homelies and poems on various subjects.

After John the see of Constantinople was occupied by Arsacius, brother of Nectarius, who died after only 14 months. He was succeeded by the perfectly orthodox Atticus, who reinstated the name of John in the diptychs¹²¹ of the fathers. Cyril condemned this and wrote to Atticus to impugn him and demand that Chrysostom's name be removed from the diptych. Atticus refused. Before his death Atticus sent Cleophas, a priest of Nicaea, 300 gold pieces to be distributed among the poor. After a Patriarchate of 21 years he died on the 10th of October.

69. Ahai, 15th Catholicos

119 NW Egypt

120 According to Nau, this refers to the Paralipomena.

121 Double panel ('double fold') in a church in which the names of the living and the dead were inscribed. The 'living' side usually included the name of the bishop to indicate that the local church was 'in communion' with him. Removal of the bishop's name from the diptych indicated a rift between the two.

On the death of Isaac, Marûtha of Maiferqat chose in his place, with the agreement of the fathers and Yazdgerd, Ahai the disciple of Mar 'Abdâ. Before his election Ahai had been superior of the monastery of his pupils. As Catholicos he enjoyed the support of Yazdgerd, who later sent him to Persia because of the pearls being transported on ships from India and China that Nahrûz his nephew, the governor of Persia, claimed had been stolen by pirates, so that Ahai could ascertain the truth of these allegations and report on them. When he arrived in Persia, the Catholicos wanted to know where those martyred by Shapur were buried. He made a written account of the martyrs in these areas and told Yazdgerd what he had seen. He had been trusted by the king and had considerable authority with him. He therefore asked the fathers to burn down all houses associated with magic and sorcery, because Christians had become associated with Marcionites and Manichaeans and adopted their practices. He then wrote a book about the martyrs in the East. Daniel son of Maryam did the same in his church history volume. He also wrote the life of his teacher Mar 'Abdâ. He was in office for four years, seven months and a few days. May God grant his soul eternal rest.

70. The Emperor Theodosius the Younger

When Arcadius died, at the time of Yazdgerd, he was thirty-three and had been Emperor for twenty-six years, half when his father was still alive and half on his own. His son Theodosius succeeded him when he was nine, at the same as his uncle Honorius, in year 721 of Alexander. The barbarians rebelled against his uncle and chose a king. In agreement with his nephew Theodosius, Honorius sent troops against them and killed them. Honorius died in year 734 of Alexander aged 38. He had reigned 28 years, two of them with his father and 26 alone. The empire was governed by Theodosius. While his mother was alive, he was orthodox and did not deviate from the right path. But alone he was led astray by his sister Pulcheria and brother-in-law Valentinian, who persuaded him to abandon the true faith and belief.

71. Yâbâlâhâ I, 16th Catholicos

On the death of Ahai the Catholicos the father and the faithful assembled to elect a replacement. Yâbâlâhâ was well-known for his virtue and zeal, as we said earlier. Yazdgerd knew him so well that he ordered him to be appointed Catholicos in the 16th year of his reign. Three years after his election, Theodosius the son of Emperor Arcadius sent Acacius of Amid¹²² with a letter for Yazdgerd. Together with Yâbâlâhâ, Acacius fixed the rules necessary for guiding the Church and the faithful, confirmed the decrees of Nicaea and Isaac the Catholicos as well as other decrees. He ordered them to be observed in detail. In this year Theophilus, who had excommunicated Chrysostom, died and was succeeded by his nephew Cyril in year 4 of the catholicate of Yâbâlâhâ. Yazdgerd thanked Theodosius for sending Acacius to him. In his turn he sent Yâbâlâhâ to the Emperor with a letter and magnificent gifts. He wrote to his friends telling them to shower Yâbâlâhâ with gifts and treat him with the greatest respect. On arriving at Theodosius' court the Catholicos handed over the letter and gave assurances of the orthodoxy of the Persian Church, the unity of its doctrine and the rejection of the two substances. Theodosius admired the intelligence of the Catholicos, offered him much money and gifts of what could not be found in Persia. He offered Yâbâlâhâ anything he wanted. On his return to his see he restored the church of Seleucia and built others with what he had received from Theodosius. Yazdgerd soon abandoned his policy of toleration and kindness towards Christians. His general Shapur persecuted them and destroyed their churches. Yazdgerd's headaches started again. Unable to find relief he sent for the Catholicos, whose prayers restored his health to him. Yazdgerd then stopped demolishing churches and exiling Christians. But Yâbâlâhâ continued to pray to our Lord (blessed be His name) that he would not see the shedding of the blood of the faithful and let him die beforehand. His prayer was answered and he died. Let his prayers be with us. He was in office for 5 years. After his death Yazdgerd began to destroy churches, exile Christians and unleash a terrible persecution of them. Among those killed was

¹²² There is a story about him in Socrates *Historia Ecclesiastica* 24, 21, which is poignantly reminiscent of what Archbishop Scher did: both sold church property, one to rescue badly treated Persian soldiers and the other to rescue his fellow Christians from the Assyrian genocide

Rabban 'Abdâ bishop of Susiane, a virtuous and scholarly man. The reason for the persecution was as follows: a priest named Hosea had destroyed the fire-temple near the church in Susiane and put out the fire because Christians were sustaining losses due to the temple guards. Yazdgerd became angry and ordered churches to be demolished. Matters remained thus until Isaac the Patricius of Armenia spoke to him in favour of the Christians. Thanks to his intervention the Armenians submitted to Yazdgerd, who ended the persecution and allayed their fears. God is our helper.

72. Ma'ana, 17th Catholicos, who was deposed

The Christians needed a successor of Yâbâlâhâ. Ma'ana the metropolitan of Persia knew Persian and Syriac. He had studied at Edessa and translated several books from Syriac into Persian. Yazdgerd knew him because he had been introduced to him with Yâbâlâhâ. The Christians asked for the help of Mirshapur, head of the militia, with Yazdgerd to get Ma'ana elected. To achieve this they offered him a large sum of money. Mirshapur helped them. He asked for an audience with the king and said to him: 'Ma'ana is Persian, capable of serving you. Allow him to be elected Catholicos.' The Christians, happy with the result, were hoping to see the restoration of the churches and the end of the persecution. But their hope, to quote Isaiah, was soon disappointed.¹²³ Indeed, one day when Ma'ana presented himself before Yazdgerd, with some of the fathers, the king stared at them. They realized that he was working on a pretext to persecute them, a pretext that he found in the behaviour of Hosea, about whom we spoke earlier. The king added: 'Caesar is the absolute master of his kingdom. He does as he wishes. I am also the absolute master of my kingdom. I will do as I wish.' The king repeated these words twice. A priest of Seleucia called Narsai replied to the king for the Catholicos: 'Your Majesty, Caesar has no power in his kingdom beyond exacting tribute and taxes and killing those hostile to him. But he does not have the power to force them to give up their religion. In fact, despite the many Jews, Christians and pagans, he does not force them to change their belief.' The king was furious, and those with him thought that

¹²³ Presumably ref. to 49, 23

Narsai should be put to death for this statement. The Catholicos then said: 'Narsai has done no more than reply to the king. He does not deserve to be killed.' Yazdgerd ordered him to be beheaded if he did not deny Christ. He ordered the garments of the Catholicos to be torn and the Catholicos to be exiled to Persia and his name ever to be said again publicly, not even in enmity. Hosea of Nisibis and Bata of Lasom tried to plead their cause, but they were stopped and asked to leave. The Magi worked hard to recruit Narsai for their religion, but his faith was unshakeable. He was beheaded and buried by the faithful in the great church of Seleucia.

Ma'ana went to Persia. Yazdgerd, on learning that he was administering his diocese from there, refused to tolerate it and had him incarcerated. He spent some time in prison before being liberated by several headmen. It was prohibited to call him 'Catholicos' during his lifetime and even after his death. He died in Persia. May God be pleased with him.

73. The Conversion of the People of Najrân

In the land of Najrân in Yemen there was a well-known merchant in the time of Yazdgerd called Hannan. One day he went to Constantinople on business. He returned home and then set out for Persia. As he was passing Hîra, he spent some time with Christians and learned their teaching. He was baptized and stayed there some time. He then went back to his own country and tried to persuade others to accept Christianity. He baptized members and others in his country and neighbouring regions. They helped him to convert the people of Himyar and the surrounding area of Abyssinia. Later a Jewish king called Masruq ruled over this area. His mother was Jewish, a captive brought from Nisibis sold to a king of Yemen. She taught her son Judaism. When he ascended his father's throne, he killed many Christians. All this is related by Barsada' in his history.

74. The death of Yazdgerd and accession of his son

The Magi began to hate Yazdgerd because he maltreated them on his accession, reduced the power of the leaders and was favourable to Christians, allowing them to build churches. They made fun of him and cursed him in their fire temples. But he was protected by the prayers of the fathers addressed to God against the devil in accordance with the promise of Our Lord to the apostles. But when Yâbâlâhâ died and Ma'ana was exiled, Yazdgerd was possessed by the devil, who succeeded in doing what he wanted with him. The king suffered more and more from headache, of which he died. This death was the occasion for the Magi of great rejoicing. His reign lasted for 21 years and 9 months. He was succeeded by his son Bahrâm. The Magi were afraid that he would follow in the footsteps of his father. But he had a great passion for games and women. He destroyed churches, dug up the bones of martyrs and threw them into the river. On the advice of the head of the army he threw Christians into prison. He seized the sacred ornaments which Yâbâlâhâ had brought back from the Roman empire, broke treaties with them and became friendly to the Magi.

75. The holy martyr Mar James the dismembered

In year three of Bahrâm James was martyred. He was a Christian from Gundeshapur, a well-known place in Persia. Yazdgerd was very fond of him and persuaded him to renounce Christianity. He showered him with honours and made him head of the Persian administration. But his mother and his wife found out and wrote from Gundeshapur to Seleucia-Ctesiphon to reprove him and express their disapproval of his exchanging religion for the transience of the world. They refused to go and meet him if he persisted in his error. James read the letter, repented and renounced Magism. The news was brought to Bahrâm, who summoned him and asked: 'Are you a Christian?' 'Yes, and I am proud of it.' The angry monarch said: 'Did you not receive gifts from my father for converting to Magism?' James

replied: 'Do not press me any further. Do not seek to frighten me. Once the stone has left the sling it does not come back. Listen to me. I will never again renounce Christianity for Magism. ' The Magi who were present condemned him to death. But the king, hoping to bring him back to Magism with threats of torture, ordered his limbs to be cut off one by one. The saint was not troubled. Each time a limb was cut off, he thanked God. With only his head, chest and belly left he sought the words of the Psalms: 'Lead my soul from its prison to give thanks to You and praise You.' ¹²⁴ Finally, he was decapitated on Friday in November year 734 of Alexander.

76. Aqbalâha bishop of Beit Garmai

This saint's father was of a noble family, friend of Shapur the Persian king, who asked him to worship the sun. The father agreed, but the son Aqbalâha refused. He became a monk at the age of fifteen, renouncing the world and its temptations. He then became a priest. He baptized those in a village of Beit Garmai, which used to belong to his father. He cured Bahrâm's daughter of an illness and asked him not to persecute Christians any more. The king was amenable to the request, but, having been put to flight by the Romans, he reneged on his promise and started his persecution once again. There were no archbishops or bishops left of those who were in the days ...¹²⁵

124 Psalms 142, 8

125 Lacuna

Chronicle of Séert: 3

Anthony Alcock

This is what Archbishop Scher calls Part Two of the Chronicle. What follows here is the first section of Part Two and covers the period 484 to 650 AD. The manuscript obviously passed through the hands of Ebedjesus Khayyat, the Catholic Archbishop of Dyarbekir and later Patriarch of Babylon (1860 to 1899), for it bears pencil notes made by him.

The longest section in the work is devoted to Joseph, a Catholicos of an interestingly varied character (section 32 pp. 176-188). From the outset it seems clear enough that he is an able physician, but that all is not well with him is signalled perhaps by the information that he is honoured by the Marzbân 'because of his clothing' (بسب لباسه). His self-indulgence and contempt for his fellow Christians are perhaps what make him interesting enough to justify this relatively long section on him.

I understand from Philip Wood¹ that an English translation with commentary of the second section of Part Two (*Patrologia Orientalis* 13 pp.438-636) is to appear in a series of translations (Texts in Translation) published by Liverpool University Press. It thus seems pointless for me to continue this series, which was originally intended to present a translation of this relatively long text in two parts.

I have referred to several dictionaries:

W.E. Crum *Coptic Dictionary* (1939)

E.W. Lane *Arabic-English Lexicon* (1863)

H. Wehr (tr. J.M Cowan) *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1971)

J. Payne-Smith *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903).

I have just come across a book that has helped me thread my way through nomenclature and other things by Aubrey R. Vine *The Nestorian Churches* (1937).

¹ *The Chronicle of Séert* (Oxford, 2013)

1. Baboi the 20th Catholicos

[Beginning is missing]

[Baboi received] from them² a lot of money. He deposed those who had sees because they had insulted him when he was in prison.

In his time there was only trouble and confusion: men and women began to conspire to elect Bishops and, by means of bribery, have them consecrated.

People said: 'This one is the Bishop of so-and-so. That one is the Bishop of so-and-so.' The faithful ran the affairs of the Church, offered the Eucharist in their houses and baptized people outside the Church. The Bishops allowed women to enter the baptistery to see the baptism. Shameful things were done, adultery was common, monks and priests married illicitly. If someone were excommunicated for a sin and denied entry into the church, they were able to receive the sacraments in the houses of the faithful.

The fathers, after witnessing this, gathered in the 25th year of Piroz³ to censure Baboi for his conduct. They established canons to prohibit marriage with the father's wife, the brother's wife, with two women and many other things. Baboi was on the side of his brother Bishops and excommunicated them, but they in turn anathematized whoever transgressed against what they had just prescribed.

Barsuma Bishop of Nisibis wrote a letter in which he he allowed priests and monks to marry if they were unable to live chastely. He used the words of Paul as a justification: 'It is better to marry than burn with desire.'⁴ The Bishops with him approved this decree.

In year twenty-six of Piroz⁵ a persecution against the Christians broke out in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He ordered Christians to call the sun 'god', and fire, water and the stars

2 The Bishops

3 Probably year 27 (484 AD), according to footnote 2 (p. 100). Synod of Beit Lapat (484 AD) in J. Chabot *Synodicon Orientale* (1902) pp. 308ff

4 1 Cor. 7,9

5 Reigned from 459 AD to 484 AD.

'children of the gods'. Those who refused were tortured. Christians were in great distress: some persevered, others succumbed. Baboi was alarmed and wrote to Zeno the Emperor to tell him what was happening to his flock and to ask him to write to Piroz that he might alleviate their suffering. He enclosed the letter in the hollow of a reed and sent it via messenger. On his arrival at Nisibis he was recognized by the followers of Barsuma, who intercepted it and sent it to Piroz. Others say that it was Barsuma himself.

The King summoned Baboi and returned the letter to him with his seal. Unable to deny its authenticity, he had put into the letter what Hanania and his companions had said concerning Nebuchadnezzar, to wit, that God had delivered him to an impious government, the worst of all governments on earth.⁶ The King had the message translated into Persian and became angry with Baboi: 'You deserve death because you have called my kingdom tyrannical and impious. I ought to have put you to death on the day when you disobeyed me by designating Bishops. But I did not, and your insolence has surpassed itself.'

The Christians present explained to Piroz that Baboi's phrase 'impious government' meant one opposed to Christians. 'If he had not said this, the Byzantines would have thought that you were a Christian, and that is why you think he has dishonoured your kingdom.' Baboi defended himself: 'I always pray for the King. I bless him and his kingdom.' Piroz replied: 'Your crime is too great to be pardoned. If the friendship you have just spoken of is sincere, worship the sun that I may see it.' Baboi refused. Piroz ordered him to be hanged on a gibbet by the same finger that bore the ring which he had used to seal the letter. He was hanged outside Seleucia-Ctesiphon by his small finger and was left there until he died. People from Hîra took his body to their town, where they buried it. His name was inscribed with those of the martyrs. He had been Patriarch for twenty years.

2. The Emperor Leo

In year 769 of Alexander Leo became Emperor.⁷ He was courageous and was an orthodox supporter of the doctrine of Chalcedon. Timothy Patriarch of Alexandria and his

⁶ Daniel 3,32

⁷ 457-474 AD

supporters tried to make him renounce it.⁸ He even gathered fifty Bishops to find out about the 318 faith. He followed the orthodox faith revealed by them and sent dissidents into exile. At Constantinople there was a great earthquake that destroyed many houses and churches.⁹

3. Anatolius Patriarch of Constantinople

This pure man allowed Dioscorus to think that he held the same faith as he held.¹⁰ But at the Council of Chalcedon he anathematized Dioscorus and championed the faith of Pope Leo. He governed the church for twenty-one years. He testified in favour of the orthodoxy of Ibas Bishop of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus and attested that their only aim in anathematizing Nestorius was to allow matters to move on. They all professed the Two Natures. You can see this in their books and letters.

The teaching of the Theopaschites was unknown in the East. All the orientals held to the orthodox faith transmitted by Addia, Mari and their pious successors.

After peace had been concluded¹¹ between Yazdgerd and Theodosius, several Persians, in the hope of acquiring knowledge, went to Edessa, where they heard the words of Dioscorus and his followers, who had been anathematized at Chalcedon for professing and teaching One Nature in Christ. Their doctrine spread and took root. Among its adherents were Jacob Baradaeus, Jacob of Saroug Bishop of Batnan, Severus, Peter the Small, Philoxenus of Mabboug - may the Almighty make them and their innovations detestable. Their story, God willing, will find a place in this work.

4. The Emperor Zeno

In year 783 of Alexander Leo died and was succeeded by his son-in-law Zeno, of senatorial family, courageous and a leader of highwaymen.¹²

8 Timothy II (Aelurus), 457-460 and 475-477.

9 Evagrius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2,12 calls it a fire

10 Leo Epist. 40

11 Theodosius made a treaty with Yazdgerd, but in 417 AD

12 قطاع الطريق

Leo had been warned of a plot orchestrated against him by his generals. He punished them and escaped their treachery. Now, Zeno enjoyed the estimation of the Emperor, who named him general of his army and sent him against the barbarians who had invaded his empire. Zeno despatched them and Leo married him to his daughter and left his empire to him. After the death of Leo, the leading figures gathered and nominated Zeno's son, the grandson of Leo. His mother said to him: 'When your father comes to you, take the crown off your head and put it on his.' When the people, accompanied by Zeno, came to pay their respects to the young King, he did what his mother had told him to do. The Byzantines praised God and thanked Leo with expressions of joy.

Zeno became Emperor. But his mother-in-law subsequently betrayed him. She urged her brother to betray him and Zeno was attacked and driven from the empire. But two years later he was recalled by army veterans and put his mother-in-law and her brother to death two years later. As master of the entire empire he drove out the heretics and subscribed to the Dyophysite teaching. But at the end of his life he changed his mind and protected Peter the Fuller. He made peace with the King of Persia. During his reign Syria was devastated by a great famine. His reign lasted seventeen years.

5. Death of Piroz

Two years after his return from the land of the Turks and his deliverance from the hands of the King of the Hail¹³ to exact vengeance for the affront he had suffered, returned to his position, violating the alliance he had made with these peoples, breaking the treaty and intent on killing their King. Without a thought for the patience of God with him, he vowed that, if he came back safe and sound, he would destroy Christianity. His heart became as hard as that of Pharaoh. The wretch did not know that it was there that punishment awaited him. Before he left he told the Marzbân of Iraq¹⁴ to destroy churches and monasteries before his return. He destroyed the School of Mar 'Abda¹⁵ and many monasteries. The Christians were afflicted by this, and many of them took refuge in

¹³ Bactria. The Ephthalites.

¹⁴ Scher: 'En syriaque: Beit Aramaye'.

¹⁵ This observation is merely by way of comparison: the 'School' here is dedicated to Christian learning, whereas the only comparable institution in Egypt, for example, was dedicated to pre-Christian learning and the word 'school' occurs probably less frequently in Coptic texts. Another point of comparison is lexical: Syriac uses the Greek term *σχολή*, while Coptic uses the native word *ANCHEG*.

faraway countries. On his way Piroz massacred 300 Christians.

The Haital saw his return and his treacherousness and waged a savage war on him, in which most of his soldiers were killed, the others taking flight. Piroz, fearful of being taken captive, threw himself on his sword, like Saul¹⁶ and killed himself. The Haital did not know this until they found his body among the dead.

God delivered people from him: his plans had rebounded on him and his violence revisited him. God had averted this blow from the Christians and did not deliver them to him. In this way He had punished Pharaoh, having him swallowed up by the sea because he had resolved to harm the children of Israel, and it was also how He had killed Sennacherib in the temple of his idols, for he had sworn to kill the children of Israel and destroy Jerusalem.

6. Gennadius Patriarch of Constantinople

Anatolius was succeeded by Gennadius as Patriarch of Constantinople. His was a time when the Church and the empire were disturbed in the East and the West. In the East Barsuma was struggling against Baboi. Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch, supported by Zeno, was disturbing the West and anathematizing anyone who professed the Two Nature in Christ. Gennadius and Felix, Pope of Rome, opposed him. His successor Hilidyon¹⁷ was Patriarch, who died in a village fire three years later.

7. Monk and demon

There was hermit in the desert. Sata, disguised as a monk, went to the hermit to ask if he would take him in and make use of his services. The monk agreed and took him in. After several years the accursed devil said to him: 'I would like some meat. If you help me, we can slaughter a sheep, which we can eat together.' The monk refused: 'God would not be

¹⁶ I Sam. 31, 3

¹⁷ Critical apparatus: Acacius (اقاقیوس)

pleased if I broke my agreement with Him. As for you, if you cannot control your appetite, eat what you will.' After several vain attempts to persuade the hermit, the demon brought a sheep, slaughtered it, roasted it and ate it in the hermit's presence. To tempt him, he left the hermit alone and put two kidneys on the window, as if he had forgotten them. The hermit saw them and supposed that his companion had forgotten them. He roasted one and ate it. The demon returned and commented that one of them had gone. He knew that the hermit had eaten it but said nothing.

Some time later the demon said: 'Why live here ? We can be of no use to our brothers. Let us go into the town. I know a place with a lot of money. We will take it and build a monastery, where monks can live and we can receive strangers and travellers. In this way we will deserve repayment.' The monk agreed and they set off to the house of a rich man, which they entered. It was night time. The wretched demon took a basket full of gold coins and put it on the head of the monk. As the monk reached the door, the demon woke the owner of the house, saying: 'Stop ! Thief ! He has taken everything in the house.' The house-owner rose immediately, took the basket without a word and imprisoned the hermit for delivery to the governor on the next day.

The demon came to visit him and, seeing him weeping and tearing his hair out, said: 'Let me give you some advice. If you follow it, you will be set free and have the money. When the house-owner comes to accuse you before the governor and brings the basket as evidence of theft, deny it and say' "I am not a thief. I am a carpenter monk. This man hired me to work for several days but did not pay me. When I claimed my rights, he argued with me, imprisoned me and called me a thief. To see if I am telling the truth, please look in the basket, which contains only the tools of a carpenter." I will ensure, with my magic spells, that the coins look like tools. If the governor believes this, he will give you the tools back and make sure you receive your wages. Thus you will be saved. If he gives you the money, we can divide it into three parts: one for you, one for me and the third for the one who ate the kidney.'

The hermit did what the demon said. He received the basket and his wages and went away in astonishment. Later, he met the demon, who said: 'You did well to follow my advice. I am not a man but a demon, an angel fallen from celestial glory. I wanted to repent and live

with monks. Having been received by God, I wanted to tell you, you and the other monks, how you must be on your guard. Go now and build a monastery with the money you have just got, to receive strangers. Pray for me. I told you to divide the money and give one part to the one who ate the kidney to warn you of your action that you may embrace the truth that you possess and not exchange it for dishonesty. I tempted you with meat, and you ate it; with money, and you stole it; with vainglory, and you were seduced into building a monastery. I overcame you. Now, persevere in prayer and be on your guard and put others on their guard against demons, whose only purpose is to destroy men.'

The demon parted and never appeared again. We beg God to deliver us from the perversity of mischief makers.

8. Acacius the 21st Catholicos

After the martyrdom of Baboi Acacius the doctor¹⁸ was elected Catholicos. He was related to Baboi, as he mentions in a letter to Barsuma. Acacius studied at the School in Edessa. He studied with Theodulus, a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who blessed him and named him 'pillar of the East'. He was good and virtuous. After some friction between Barsuma and Baboi, he went to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, where he taught for as long as Baboi lived, helping and supporting him with the Bishops against Barsuma. He wrote a refutation of the letter written Barsuma against the Catholicos. When he was head of the Church, he directed matters wisely. His opponents, the Magi, maltreated and imprisoned him for some time. The supporters of Barsuma, who hated him, accused him of adultery, but their accusation was unsuccessful. Acacius was able to refute his enemies by showing himself naked to the Bishops, who were able to see that he was a eunuch, which made his accusers blush.

He went to Constantinople during the reign of Zeno and asked him to recall the Bishops he had exiled. He wrote a treatise on faith, in which he refuted those who professed One Nature. He also wrote three other discourses on fasting. Both Greeks and Persian bear witness to his wisdom and virtue.

¹⁸ ملفان: seems to be a transcription of the Syriac ܡܠܦܢܐ, which refers to a learned person.

9. Mar Narsai the doctor

This venerable saint was from a village called in the region of Ma'althâye. Together with Acacius he went to visit Theodulus, who blessed him and called him 'the tongue of the East', which he was. He remained for twenty years at Edessa. The dissidents, when they learned that he professed the same faith as Diodorus and Theodore, tried to burn his cell down. He fled to Nisibis, where he found a small School set up by Simeon Gramaqiya and settled there. Barsuma took up his cause and supported him. Many went to stay with him. The Syrians at Edessa also withdrew to be with him. He wrote 360 metrical homilies, one for each day of the year in 12 volumes. In them he refutes the work of Jacob Saroug and revealed the malicious nature of his belief. He also wrote a book called *Corruption of Morals*, in which he discussed what was being done by heretic priests and monks. He wrote commentaries on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. He also wrote funeral orations. When he left Edessa, his books, or some of them, were burned by dissidents. He died after having lived in Nisibis for forty years and was buried in the church still known today by his name.

He had two disciples, Abraham and John, who followed in his footsteps. Abraham wrote commentaries on Isaac, Joshua, Judges, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Book of Kings, Song of Songs, poetry, letters and a treatise on the reason for setting up schools. He directed the School at Nisibis for about 60 years and had more 1,000 disciples.

John compiled a volume of questions and commentaries on the Pentateuch, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Job, a polemic against Jews and one against Magi. He also composed funeral orations, homilies, discourses on the rogations¹⁹ and one on the death of Chosroes Qabad.

Ma'ana, who was named Metropolitan of Persia, was also with Narsai, Barsuma and Acacius at the School of Edessa. He was originally from Shiraz. When nominated Metropolitan, he translated the works of Diodorus and Theodore from Greek into Syriac.

¹⁹ The Syriac is very similar to the Arabic

Mâna and Ma'ana, Metropolitans of Persia, almost contemporaries of Theodore, had not translated them. It was this saint who proclaimed the orthodox faith in Persian after Mâna and Ma'ana. Ibas Bishop of Edessa wrote to Mari about what had happened to Nestorius with Cyril. Ma'ana compiled religious odes, poetry and hymns in Persian. He sent the books to the maritime countries and India. At first he was hostile to Baboi and supported Barsuma, but after participating in the council of Acaccius, he revised his initial opinions.

10. Anastasius the Emperor.

Events concerning Severus and his followers.

In Alexander 802, the year in which Piroz died, Anastasius became Emperor. He followed the faith of Severus, One Nature, and abandoned the belief of Macedonius Patriarch of Constantinople. Two wretches, Damastius the sophist and Mazfûla, had joined him and told him of the error of the dissidents. On the order of Anastasius, Severus and his followers gathered and anathematized those who professed the Two Natures and accepted the decrees of the Chalcedonian fathers, whom they excommunicated. They added to the *Sanctus immortalis* the words *Qui crucifixus es pro nobis*. People became agitated and tried to depose the King: 'How could he reign over us, the one who attributes the suffering of the Cross to Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth ?' The head of the army of Anastasius, who was orthodox, rebelled and marched against him. Confronted by this danger, Anastasius removed his crown and promised to rectify what he had done if the army did not rebel. Peace returned. But as soon as the *magister militum* withdrew to Thrace, Anastasius reverted to his former impiety. He restored the Trisagion, killed several hermits and exiled many of the orthodox fathers as a favour to the wretched Severus and his followers.

In the tenth year of his reign, on the 2nd of Hazîrân²⁰ at 9 am, there was a solar eclipse: the world was shrouded in darkness for four hours so that nothing was visible. There was a terrible earthquake at Constantinople. Large numbers of locusts came and ravaged the crops. For fourteen months the disc of the sun appeared to be uneven. This astonished everyone, who thought it was punishment for the exile of the fathers. The town of Nicopolis collapsed and swallowed up its inhabitants.

²⁰ June. An eclipse at Constantinople, that can be dated to June 29 512 AD ('six years before the death of Anastasius'), is recorded by John Lydus *De Ostentis* 6.

The Emperor and Severus believed that God was punishing those He loved. Anastasius supported the dissidents throughout his life. Severus came from Asia. He was a pagan and studied philosophy in Palestine. He was baptized at a monastery in Constantinople, known as that of Theodore and built by Eutychian monks. The monks did not permit baptism or the priesthood, claiming that all had been corrupted since Chalcedon, which professed Two Natures. The abbot of the monastery was called Epiphanius. When he fell ill, the monks said: 'What happens to us if he dies ? Who will transmit the priesthood to this congregation, which has no Bishop ?' The abbot blessed a headcloth and said to them: 'If you wish to ordain a priest or deacon, put this on his head.' After his death, his right hand was cut off, embalmed and put it with the headcloth. It was in this monastery that Severus settled. Philoxenus and the Bishops, his supporters, saw his wisdom and ability to defend their sect and elected him Patriarch. Severus, supported by Amantius the chamberlain of the Emperor,²¹ gathered together his followers and anathematized all those at Chalcedon who professed Two Natures. The birds of gold, which Constantine had had made and placed in the baptistery of the church in Antioch, were taken by Severus, melted down and given to his accomplice. Hormisdas Pope of Rome, having learned of this, gathered together the fathers and anathematized Severus. The latter begged Anastasius for help and caused a lot of grief. He sent legates to Persia with letters proclaiming his belief.

Jacob of Saroug, an orthodox student of Barsuma at Edessa who defended the Chalcedon fathers professing the Two Natures, saw that the Emperor was supporting the sect of Severus, abandoned his belief and went over to the heretics, an enemy of the truth. He was consecrated Bishop of Batnan by Severus and Philoxenus. His works include poems about the dispensation of Our Lord, in which he defended even the doctrine of Julian, who taught the immortality of the body of Our Lord, and that of Severus and his followers who admitted only One Nature and the hypostatic union, in a very general sense. He sent his books and discourses to Syria, where they were received by the Severans and those who professed the Two Natures. Impostor ! He attributed the suffering and death to the divine essence. He gave his name to the Jacobites, which is still used.

21 صاحب الملك

11. Milas King of Persia

After the death of Piroz the Persians could not agree about a successor. Ultimately Milas was chosen in place of Qabad. Milas was tolerant of Christians. Churches were rebuilt and he welcomed the Catholicos Acacius when he came to visit.

In year two of his reign the heretics and followers of Severus began to disseminate their doctrine in Persia and corrupt people's belief. They were able to instruct and baptize them and build churches for them with ease and rapidity. The Catholicos learned of this and anathematized them together with all enemies of the orthodox faith. He established canons for ecclesiastical discipline. He ordered monks and the devout to make their homes far from people, forbidding them to live in towns, villages and places where there were Bishops and priests, offer up the Eucharist, baptize and thus corrupt the laws of the Church, causing trouble among the faithful.

He did this because of the heretics, who had come to Persia and pretended to be ascetics. He anathematized those who resisted what he had just established. He made peace with Barsuma and began to correspond with him. He annulled all the anathemas and interdicts that Baboi and Barsuma had made against each other.

On the death of Acacius Patriarch of Constantinople Euphemius became the next Patriarch. He was old and well read in the writings of the Interpreter, in which he took pride. He was the friend and correspondent of Barsuma the Metropolitan of Nisibis. He was accused before Anastasius of being a Nestorian. It is said that he refused to be pressurized by the Emperor to anathematize Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius and their followers. He was exiled and replaced by Macedonius the monk, who was an orthodox believer in the Two Natures. Anastasius did not know until after his election. He called for a synod, in which he anathematized Dioscorus and his Council. He even reproached Anastasius for his belief. The latter became angry and banished him on the pretext that he accepted the belief of Eutychius and Apollinarius.

12. Qabad King of Persia

When the Persians elected Milas, son Piroz, and rejected Qabad, the latter withdrew angrily to the King of the Hephtharities and told him the story of Milas before his accession. He was well received and stayed there for three years. In the fourth year he sent him with his troops to fight his brother. On his arrival at Seleucia-Ctesiphon he found him dead. So people gave up war and bloodshed. He had reigned four years. Some say that he was killed after his eyes had been gouged out. He had built a town on the banks of the Zab in the territory of Marga.

Qabad reigned without difficulty. He sent gifts to the Hephtharite King. Far from punishing his subjects for what they had done, he was benevolent. He was the gentlest Persian King and the most knowledgeable about Magism. At the beginning of his reign he started building towns and villages of wood and stone. He built bridges and dams on the rivers that he might bring water in difficult places. He built many villages in Mosul and Iraq, where he brought people from elsewhere to work on the fields. He allowed churches and monasteries to be built. He supported the teaching of Zarâdost, who acknowledged two great and eternal principles and the commonality of women, to wit, that no man should ally himself to one woman to the exclusion of others. He also built temples and hotels²² to bring the most pleasure-addicted men and women, who were incapable of self-restraint. This upset the Magi because of their wives and children.

Like Julian the Emperor, he reduced kitchen expenses. on the grounds that luxury of that sort stems from prodigality. He followed the Byzantines by digging irrigation canals to improve agriculture. He hated war. The Magi asked to repeal laws in which he prescribed the practices of Zoroastrianism. His reason for refusing this: 'Magism orders a woman not to have a secret affair with a man other than her husband. If she bears the child of another man, she has to give it up to him.' They tried to kill him but were unsuccessful. After ten years on the throne they were able to depose him.

22 Ar. word still used in this sense: فندق

13. Elisha the doctor and Metropolitan of Nisibis

Qabad ordered each religion in the empire to draw up a document outlining its faith to be presented to him. Acacius, unable to work on it because he was otherwise engaged in church matters, wrote to Elisha, who had been an exegete at Nisibis and one of those who had left Edessa with Narsai, to ask him to prove in writing the reality and orthodoxy of Christianity. He produced a book with 38 chapters on the divine essence, the Trinity, the Creation, the Hexameron, the creation of man and the angels, the fall of Satan and the Coming of Our Lord to the end of time. He sent it to Acacius, who translated it into Persian and presented it Qaba. The same doctor also compiled commentaries on the Pauline letters, Job, Joshua and Judges. He completed the commentary of Theodore on Samuel from the first prayer he had made. He also wrote the *Reason for Founding Schools*.

14. Damâsf Persian King

The Magi deposed Qabad and chose Damâsf.²³ Qabad was imprisoned. Despite repeated efforts his sister never managed to visit him. She appealed directly to Damâsf, who yielded to her requests and allowed to stay with her brother in prison. She was tireless in her cunning attempts to liberate him. Finally she resorted to the following stratagem: she wrapped her brother in a mat²⁴ and claiming that these were the clothes she had been using during her menstruation period, she summoned the launderer to take them and wash them.²⁵ The prison guards would not go near for fear of being polluted. So Qabad escaped and fled to the land²⁶ of the Turks, with whom he had been on close friendly terms since his visit at the time of his father. He asked for and received an armed force with which he returned to his country and overthrew Damâsf after two years and expelled him. He killed several Magi and imprisoned others. He was benevolent to Christians because they had helped him flee to the land of the Turks.

23 I have written what is in Arabic. Scher: Zamasf.

24 Ar. فراش. Cf. Coptic $\pi\rho\eta\omega$ Crum 271a. J. Černý *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (1975) p 128 thinks that the Egyptian word is of Demotic origin.

25 Perhaps the parallel may strike some as irreverent, but extraction from prison via the laundry, with the help of the jailer's daughter, also features prominently in the *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame (1913).

26 The text seems to say بلد, but the critical apparatus has an unexplained ملكت, translated as 'King'.

15. Babai 23rd Catholicos

Acacius - may his prayers be with us - died in year ten of Qabad. The Bishop of Hîra, his disciple, transported his body to Hîra, where he buried him. Damâsf was King. The Christians needed to elect a Catholicos. Damâsf had a Christian astrologer called Mûsa. He asked his master for permission to have a Catholicos elected. When asked all the fathers chose a man of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, related to Mûsa the astrologer, and secretary of the Marzbân of Beit Aramâye.²⁷ His name was Babai, son of Hormizd. He was very old and had a wife and children. He was virtuous and learned in the Scriptures. He provided hospitality to bishops and strangers, imitating the conduct of monks and saints. Babai refused, but the bishops would not leave him until they had made him Catholicos. Both Damâsf and Qabad, after his return from the land of the Turks, were both favourable to him.

Babai gathered together 32 fathers. He made Church laws. He rejected the writings of Baboi, Barsuma and Acacius and their anathemas. He agreed to what they had said about marriage and ordered all the ministers of the church to contract open marriage with one woman only. He ordered a synod to be held every four years on the second of Tishrin,²⁸ near the Catholicos, to regulate the affairs of the church and provide assistance.

One day he appeared with Mûsa before Damâsf, who said to them: 'Why do you honour the bones of the dead? Dead bodies decay and become dust. Why do you venerate them and not put them in coffins, like the Magi?' 'We know that death is a state of inertia and bodies become dust. But we believe that they will be more beautiful and striking on their resurrection than they were before. This teaching has been given to us: "All men will be resurrected to immortality."²⁹ As Christ was resurrected, so will we be. Like the grain that dies in the earth and loses its beauty, it pushes up to be more beautiful than it was, and so will the children of Adam. If you do not believe what I have just said, consider that man owes his existence to a drop that forms in the darkness of the interior.³⁰ He then receives limbs, vein and bones, and after nine months, by the power of the Almighty God, he comes

27 Ar. 'Nabt territory' (بلد النبط)

28 November

29 1 Cor. 15,52

30 الحشا

perfectly formed. So it is with the resurrection and change of man and state of the bodies after the resurrection.'

He approved of what he had heard. Babai came away from him in joy. Matters went well in the days of Babai, who was Catholicos for five years before he died.

16. A pleasant story

This story was told by one of the fathers. In a certain place there was a rich woman, very charitable and virtuous. One of her neighbours was a poor widow, to whom she gave alms. One day the widow was with the rich woman, who had taken out her jewels to adorn herself after finishing her work. She was unable to find her pearl necklace. She looked everywhere and suspected that the widow had stolen it and demanded it back. The widow denied this and swore that she knew nothing about it. She would never repay her kindness with such a despicable act. The dispute continued and people got to know about it. Given the impossibility of finding witnesses, it was decided to make the accused swear an oath and excommunicate the one who had stolen the necklace. Both women agreed to this. A vigil priest³¹ who happened to be passing on his way to church with a child was asked to excommunicate the thief. The priest refused. But after more pressure he said: 'The one who has taken the necklace is obliged by the word of God to return it.' Hardly had he said this than a mouse appeared with the necklace in its mouth. After depositing it in front of those assembled and waiting to see what happened, the mouse moved off a little and exploded. The astonished group began to praise God for what they had seen. I have told this wonderful story that the ignorant might not despise the word of God or excommunication of priests.

17. The attack on Amid by Qabad: the Vision

On his return from the land of the Turks, Qabad attacked Amid and besieged it for a long time, but was unable to capture because of its wide ramparts. He decided to leave and went

31 Scher has a note: *praefectus vigiliarum* - *sacerdos caecus*. I am not sure that I understand what the latter part means. Payne-Smith (p. 561b) ܩܝܠܐ: priest whose office it was to intone nocturns

to lay siege to the Byzantine cities. One night he had a dream: 'Do not be discouraged. Stay here.' Quite amazed Qabad stayed and on the following evening took the town by storm. There was much bloodshed. Some took refuge in the churches. Qabad went to a church and, on opening the door, saw an image of Our Lord and asked what it was. He was told that it was the image of Christ. He worshipped it, saying: 'This is the image that appeared to me and told me to go to the town and He would deliver it to me because the townspeople were sinners. He spared those who had taken refuge in the churches. He took everything he found and went back to Seleucia-Ctesiphon with it, leaving a garrison there. When news of the capture of Amid became known, the Greeks laid siege to Persians, defeated them and drove them out.

18. Mar Abraham the Great

It was at the time of Qabad that this virtuous man left Kashkar to devote himself to the religious life and works of heaven. As God made Abraham the father of the nations who believed in God, he also made this Abraham the father of the monks in Persia. He went first to Hîa, where he converted many and turned from the worship of al Zohra (Venus). He left there and after much travelling made his way to Egypt to visit the anchorites in the desert and Tur Sina'. There the Holy Spirit revealed many things to him. He returned to Nisibis and settled at the School, where he studied with the Abraham the Exegete and John his companion.

The daughter of one of the nobles in Nisibis was possessed by a troublesome demon. God wished to reveal the virtues of Abraham. The demon cried out: 'Woe is me. Here is this Nabatean wearing a cloak who lives in the School, he is tormenting me.' The father of the girl heard this and went to the School. He found Abraham deep in the study of Theodore. The pupils implored him to pray for the girl, and he gave in and cured her.

He went out secretly at night to climb Mount Izla and live there alone. He occupied a cave that had once belonged to Jacob Metropolitan of Nisibis, living on mountain plants. His fame spread far and wide and people brought the sick to him, and he cured them.

There were many locusts on this mountain. The local people used to complain of them. He gave them holy water, which they mixed with the water used for their land. The locusts disappeared. When the brothers were disturbed by phantoms and diabolical voices, they took a fragment of the clothes belonging the saint and the wretched creatures vanished.

He built a monastery in which many monks gathered from all over. It was he who prescribed the tonsure. He changed their habit and the form of the footwear, to distinguish them from heretic monks. He blessed his children before his death and ordered several of them to found monasteries in the hills and the desert. He lived down to the time of Hormizd, son of Chosroes. He died and was buried in his monastery. His numerous biographies reveal his actions and works. May his prayers be with us.

19. Shîlâ the 23rd Catholicos

Shîlâ was archdeacon of the Catholicos Baband came from Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He was elected Catholicos in year 16 of Qabad. He was married and had a daughter. He was extraordinarily learned, with a great love of money and worldly things. He excommunicated Mari of Tahal, who had reproached him for his conduct. Qabad honoured him for the sake of Bûzaq bishp of Susa, who had cured him and his daughter of an illness from which they were suffering. It was a time of peace for Christians, and they started to build churches.

Some say that it was his wife who persuaded him to amass money and leave the right path. In fact, many men have been deceived by women: Adam, Joseph, Samson, David, Solomon. Job on the other hand resisted his wife, who wanted him to blaspheme and whom he called mad, and was victorious and was saved. Ahab followed the advice of his wife Jezabel against Naboth and was punished with her. Mamoi, the wife of Barsuma, was so upset to see the people of Nisibis honouring Narsai that she persuaded her husband to exile Narsai from the School: 'What is there for us to do here ? Do you not see that the world is eager to see Narsai ?' The latter retired to the land of Qardon, where he wrote discourses, in which he dealt with what had happened to him and the spitefulness of

women. He sent these texts to Nisibis. They were spoken³² in the church before Barsuma, who repented of what he had done and recalled Narsai and honoured him with his friendship for the rest of his life.

Several women on the other hand have helped to make their husbands and encouraged them to do good. Sara the wife of Abraham, because she was hospitable to strangers, served the angels who visited Abraham. Rebecca was virtuous and told her husband not to let her son Jacob marry an unbeliever and went to consult Melchizedek about her affairs and her pregnancy. The mother of Gregory of Nazianze was responsible for her husband, two sons and a daughter becoming Christian. When her husband became bishop, she looked after his business, encouraging him to do good, as the Theologian tells us. The wife of Babai helped him to become a bishop and take good care of church matters.

Anastasius exiled Macedonius Patriarch of Constantinople and replaced him with Euphemius, who despite being orthodox and an adversary of Peter and his followers, nevertheless changed and gave up his belief to follow the Emperor. Felix in Rome wrote to him and asked him to retract and anathematized him when he did not. Acacius summoned the synod, he anathematized Euphemius and all his followers. Timothy, who succeeded him, died the same year as Anastasius, after being head of the Church for six years.

20. The Emperor Justin

After Anastasius the next Emperor was Justin from year 829 of Alexander. He was orthodox his entire life. He proclaimed the Council of Chalcedon, which professed the Two Natures. He recalled the fathers exiled by Severus under Zeno and Anastasius and wrote to Hormizdas of Rome to repair the damage that had happened in Egypt over the last thirty years and estranged honourable men. He gathered 134 bishops to anathematize Severus and all who professed One Nature. He executed Amantius, the protector of Severus who had fled and changed his name. He exiled to Philippopolis Philoxenus, bishop of Mabboug, who was incarcerated in a room above the kitchen and asphyxiated by the smoke rising through a hole in the ceiling.

32 قىلا

After the flight of Severus, John Patriarch of Jerusalem, convened thirty bishops and excommunicated him. In the same year 40 bishops assembled at Tyre to anathematize him too. In the course of his extensive travels Severus wrote to Theodora the wife of Justin for support. After some time hiding in Constantinople he fled to the desert of Egypt, where he remained unknown until his death. His body was eaten by wolves, as the prophet of the Israelites³³ said when they were being chastized: 'This is why the lion of the forest has met them. The wolf of the evening has torn them to pieces and the tiger is waiting for them on the road. They have ignored the Lord.'

The teaching of Severus spread at Nisibis and the surroundings. Severus had written two liturgies, hymns and other works.

There was heavy snowfall in the time of Justin. Crops and seeds were ravaged by locusts for five years. Justin exiled those who rejected Chalcedon and the synod of Hormisdas. He destroyed their churches. He cleaned the land of dissident heretics, and most of them fled to Syria.³⁴

21. Jacob Baradaeus

In year 5 of Justin Jacob Saroug died. His teaching had been disseminated by a certain Jacob Baradaeus. He was given this surname because of his threadbare clothes.³⁵ He was originally from a village in Nisibis, called al Âjma.³⁶ Severus in his flight at the time of Justin consecrated him bishop with two other priests called Theodore and Paul the Black, who were to travel the land spreading their false belief of Two Natures and the synod convened by Justin. Severus retired to Egypt and Baradaeus went to the East, where he was joined by two Armenians Jiyorji and Jiyorjius. He made them bishops and they made him Catholicos. He constantly ordained priests and deacons and caused conflict between bishops and their flocks. He often wore the uniform of a soldier and sometimes wore monastic, sometimes lay clothing. Mostly he wore rags, hence his name.

33 Jer. 6

34 Scher says that this passage is full of historical inaccuracy

35 Բարադ

36 Բարադ

Justin, to whom he had been denounced, sent people to look for and arrest him But they were unable to find him because he kept changing his appearance. Anthimus Patriarch of Constantinople, Peter bishop of Apamea and Jacob supported him during his life. He made his way to Persia, where he exposed the depravity agreed upon at Chalcedon, confirmed the doctrine of Severus and his followers and exposed the lies of Jacob Saroug. He was received by the people of Takrit, Karme and Hassassa. Some of those who at the time of Justin had fled to Persia joined him, spread and recruited people for the sect. He lived to the age of 73, according to the Jacobites. It is said in books of the Byzantines that Jacob had been ordained in a town³⁷ near Constantinople with others exiled at the time of Justin the Christian Emperor, may God have mercy on him.

22. The Heretics with Justin

When Justin learned that heretics were receiving Communion in order to throw it away, he became angry with them and, on the advice of John Patriarch of Constantinople, he ordered them to be arrested on Palm Sunday. Several of them were thrown into narrow prisons and others fled to Syria. He wrote to all the officials responsible for the border with Persia to exile monophysites who refused to profess Two Natures. Some fled to Hîra. The Catholicos Shîlâ, fully confident in God, sought them out to give them three choices: profession of the Two Natures, argument or exile. Supported by the heretic al Hajâj, son of Qais of Hîra, courtier of al Mundhir son of Na'aman King of the Arabs. They rejected his proposal.

Shîlâ questioned them in the presence of Mundhir and his people and said: 'What do you say ? Has God the Logos taken a body from Mariam or has His person been changed into flesh ? If you admit the union in the second sense, who is the one who is said to have begun life in the body of a woman, was conceived and born ? Who wept, was thirsty, died and was buried ?' They had nothing to reply. Those present approved the orthodoxy of their belief.

Justin wrote to Mundhir to drive out the dissidents who had fled there. Mundhir agreed, and some took flight, whole others remained concealed. Some withdrew to Najrân, where they settled and spread the teaching of Julian, Severus' teacher, whic claimed that Jesus'

³⁷ قسطنطين: castrum

body had descended from heaven. This teaching became popular throughout the land of Pîram.³⁸ The heretics deceived the people of Upper Egypt, who had fled there from the imperial authorities. They were converted later by Mar 'Abda, son of Hanif who built the monastery at Gamra. Shîla died in year 34 of Qabad, after 18 years as Catholicos.

Justin ordered John, the Patriarch of Constantiniople who succeeded Timothy, to anathematize Severus, Jacob and their followers. John gathered 43 bishops and excommunicated them. He transported the bones of Macedonius and put them with those of the fathers. He died after being head of the Church for two years. He was succeeded by Epiphanius, a scholar. Ordered by Justin he excommunicated Peter, Severus, Jacob and all their followers. He asked the Emperor to exile pagans, but some of them were baptized, some for religious reasons and others for fear of the Emperor.

23. The Emperor Justinian

Justin - may God have mercy on him - died in year 838 after 9 years on the throne. His relative Justinian, who followed him, followed his example by driving out heretics and Manichaeans from Syria. On 1st Tishrin of year 1 of his reign there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed Laodicea. He fought the Persians for four years, with many dead on both sides. In Palestine there was a Jewish revolt and the rebels appointed a King. Justinian sent an army against and crushed the rebellion. In year seven of his reign in the month of Nisan there was a solar eclipse, and for forty days there was a sign in the sky that looked like a lance.

24. Chosroes Anûshirwân

Qabad reigned for 42 years. He had many children, and before he died he appointed Chosroes his successor, who had been born while Qabad was in exile in the land of the Turks. He loved him more than his other children. After his father's death Chosroes showed the will made in his favour and was accepted by the Magi. He murdered his brothers and army generals lest what had happened to his father happened to him. He was well read in philosophy, which he says he learned from Barsuma bishop of Qardû and Paul

³⁸ However this name is read, it seems to be near Hîra

the Persian philosopher, who renounced Christianity after having been denied the Metropolitan see of Persia. He was sympathetic to Christians and preferred their religion to all others. But peace between Persia and Constantinople came to an end. Mar Âbâ refused to go with him to Constantinople and he began to behave differently and display his hatred of Christians. But he continued to employ Christians, as his father had done. He became a student of Mani, who believed in Good and Evil, and abandoned Magism.

25. Narsai the 24th Catholicos and Elisha the 28th Catholicos

When Shîlâ died, the Church and Christians were at peace. But the deliberations on the choice of a successor caused disagreement between the higher clergy and the faithful. Narsai and Elisha wanted to be Catholicos and had their supporters. The faithful gathered at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. There was disagreement over the election. Bûzaq of Susa intervened and his decision was accepted by the majority because he was not a candidate for the position. His vote was the same as that of the majority: Narsai the scholar, the benevolent, the virtuous, the one dedicated to fasting, to prayer and reading the Scriptures, a skilled debater with great prestige among the other scholars and the people. Votes were cast before the Gospel in the church of Aspanir. Taiman archbishop of Basra was summoned to be present for the consecration.³⁹ Bûzaq bishop of Susa went to the Emperor at Helwan, where he had gone because of the climate.

The priests and other ministers of the church were against the election of Narsai, on the grounds that he was worldly and, because he did not know the laws of the Church, was incapable of administering it. They elected Elisha of Ctesiphon,⁴⁰ the site of the cathedral church. He had spent some time in the Byzantine Empire and had studied medicine. On his return to Seleucia-Ctesiphon this skill recommended him to the King and his ministers. Shîlâ, who saw his influence and the friendship of the Magi, gave him his daughter in marriage and, in his will, made him his successor. 'This man', said the people, 'is a child of the Church. He knows his business, is able to do it and is respected and honoured by the Magi.' One group agreed to him, the other did not, on the grounds that he would never renounce the engagements that he had contracted and signed. The fathers arrived to

39 Ar. اسياميد. Syr. مڛܝܡܝܕ

40 Arabic: from Seleucia-Ctesiphon from Ctesiphon (من المدائن من افسيفون)

consecrate Narsai, but those in favour of Elisha also arrived to prevent it. The matter remained thus hanging from Haiziran until Nisan.⁴¹

At length David of Merv bishop of arrived with several bishops differing as to equity⁴² and consecrated Elisha in the church of Aspanir, overriding the rules that laid out the consecration of Patriarchs in the church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon known as Âkwâkh. Elisha, thanks to the royal decree obtained for him by Biron, the imperial doctor, and the plentiful gifts distributed to government ministers, occupied the see in church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon built by Mar Mari, the apostle (God bless him) Jûbar, bishop of Nisibis, the bishops of Zabe and Hîra, with other bishops, arrived to consecrate Narsai, according to custom, in the cathedral church. Jacob bishop of Gundishapur⁴³ and Samuel bishop of Kashkar remained neutral.

The confusion, simony and complaints were unheard of and unprecedented. Both Patriarchs consecrated bishops, whom they sent everywhere. Two altars were set up in every church. When Christians went to church, they did not pray but fought each other and sometimes even tried to kill each other. There was enmity in families. Dissidents laughed about it, while monks and hermits wept and prayed to the Almighty to disperse the testing clouds that had darkened the Church, as He had ended the misfortunes in the reign of Piroz through the intervention of Qabad and Chosroes.

Elisha, with the support of the King, had Narsai and some of his followers imprisoned, but he was released thanks to Chosroes' son. Elisha travelled the country. He went to Rai and Merv, where he incarcerated some of his opponents. He then returned to Persia, where he consecrated Metropolitans and bishops in Khuzestan and Bahrain and punished opponents. Jacob the Metropolitan of Gundishapur was an opponent who wrote a book about the duties of superiors in the matter of ecclesiastical affairs and the notorious damage caused by Elisha.

When Elisha returned to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, he made common cause with the

41 June to April

42 Arabic: *المخالفين للاستوا*. I do not know what it means.

43 In the same province as Susa, Khuzestan. Christianity seems to have been established there in the 4th cent. and by the 7th cent. it was well-known as a centre of medical knowledge.

Metropolitans and bishops to punish the people of Kashkar. He consecrated for them a

bishop called Barshabâ in place of Samuel, but the people of Kashkar would not accept him and he returned to Elisha. Thanks to Biron the doctor, who obtained for him a royal edict to help him, and high-ranking soldiers, who were ready to support him, Elisha resolved to attack Kashkar. When they learned of this, they prepared to defend themselves by repelling anyone who advanced against them. They were supported by people in Khuzestan and Beit Garmai, opponents of Elisha. Elisha was very angry: 'How can people in Kashkar, these loathsome flies, who claim that they have never accepted me and have even humiliated me, conquer me, who have triumphed in all countries ?' When the people of Kashkar heard this, they became angrier. Elisha went into his house, with the royal edict in his hand. A Kashkarian approached him to kiss his hand, and Elisha held out his hand. The Kashkarian took the decree from him and gave it to someone else, who disappeared without trace. A fight broke out, in which clothes were torn and fists flew. Elisha was very upset at the loss of the edict, which he had obtained with difficulty, and at the humiliating mockery to which he had been subjected by his adversaries.

Narsai died. Biron asked the King to authorize Elisha by decree. The King ignored him and ordered Elisha to be stripped of his office and replaced Paul the bishop of Susa. Bishop Samuel returned to Kashkar, where there was a synod to anathematize Elisha and his supporters. The schism between the two Patriarchs lasted for twelve years, from year 35 of Qaba to year 6 of his son Chosroes.

26. Paul the 26th Catholicos

Paul was the archdeacon of Bûzaq, bishop of Susa. He succeeded Narsai. Jacob, Metropolitan of Gundishapur and the bishop of Kashkar persuaded him to help neither Narsai nor Elisha, and he did not. Chosroes was favourable to him, because in the third year of his reign, when leaving Persia during stifling heat, Paul had brought water on his animals enough for the whole army dying of thirst in the mountains. He admired Paul, because he was the only one in Susa who had the interests of the King at heart. Out of love and gratitude he resolved to make him head of the Christians. When the events described earlier were over and the Christians needed a new Catholicos, the King ordered it to be

Paul. He died two months later, the day of the Hosanna⁴⁴ in year six of Chosroes. After becoming Catholicos, Paul inclined somewhat towards Elisha and forgot his oath and what he had resolved.

27. Mar Âbâ the Great the 27th Catholicos

This holy and virtuous father came from the village of Hale in the region of Radan. He was a fervent Magus. He was a secretary of the Marzbân of Beit Aramâye, who lived in Radan. God wanted to select him and did so as follows: One day as he was crossing the Tigris to go to his village, a student named Joseph offered to go with him. Mar Âbâ chased him away and made him leave the skiff. The skiff arrived in the middle of the river when a strong wind arose and drove it back to the bank. The wind subsided, and Joseph repeated his offer. Mar Âbâ once again rejected it, reprimanded him and told him to go away. At about the midpoint of the river, the wind rose again and drove the skiff back to the bank. This time, when the wind subsided and they started to cross again, Joseph was already in the skiff and his modest and unruffled demeanour persuaded Mar Âbâ to let him remain there. From the start there was no wind at all. Mar Âbâ asked him what his religion was, and Joseph told him. Mar Âbâ was impressed and started to question him about the faith. Joseph told him and convinced him of the truth of Christianity. From that moment he gave himself up to fasting, prayer and study. He even confessed his Christianity to his master, who wanted to know why he was going to church. Mar Âbâ received baptism in a village called Ahad from a priest called Bar Sahde, who had founded the monastery of Alleja at Hîra, where he was later buried. Alleja was the daughter of Na'aman, the son al Mûndhir the Arab.

He then went to Nisibis, where he enrolled in the School and became a pupil of Ma'na, who later became bishop of Arzun. He learned quickly and became an exegete. He went to the Byzantine empire, where he met a man of Edessa named Thomas, who was well versed in Greek and so was able to teach him. Mar Âbâ, who knew Persian and Syriac, also learned Greek. Once in the Byzantine empire, they reached Alexandria, where they gathered the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Mar Âbâ spoke in Syriac and his companion translated into Greek. The Jacobites became angry that so many went to listen to them and gathered

⁴⁴ Probably Palm Sunday

in great numbers to drive them out of Alexandria. They withdrew to Constantinople, where they displayed their knowledge. Justinian heard about them and forced them to anathematize Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius. They refused. He ordered them to be mutilated, but the bishops refused to do this, as a mark of respect. Thereafter they were obliged to flee.

After arriving at Nisbis the people there went to find Mar Âbâ to ask him to take charge of instruction, interpretation and preaching because his words were so clear and pleasant. They selected him at the request of Mar Abraham, who had been before him. Abraham had retired two miles from Nisibis. He began to write essays and to drop pearls from his lips that had until then remained concealed. He reformed some of the abuses that had occurred in the churches of that country. His fame spread. He made great efforts to unmask the ignominy and the shame of Zoroastrianism, to turn people from their impurity and show them the horror of this teaching, in which all bodily pleasures are permitted. He brought back the true faith and restored Theophilus to the path from which he had strayed.

Paul the Catholicos died after a short Patriarchate without being able to repair the disorder caused by the disagreement between Narsai and Elisha. The fathers and all Christians in the service of Chosroes convened to elect his successor. The merits and virtues of Mar Âbâ persuaded them to appoint him in year 847 of Alexander, the 16th year of Anûshirwân. He reformed the church and removed abuses. He ended the episcopal duality precipitated by his predecessors. He founded at Seleucia-Ctesiphon a school where he appointed Ishai as exegete, followed by Ramisho'. He renewed the canons that had been established successively in Byzantium, the Orient and Edessa, with additions required by the circumstances. He translated the Old Testament from Greek into Syriac. He wrote canons for the Psalms. He wrote a commentary on Genesis, the Psalms, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Letters of Paul. He wrote many letters and much on ecclesiastical knowledge.

When Anûshirwân invaded Byzantium, Mar Âbâ did not accompany him so as not to see bloodshed. The Magi, who hated him, made four accusations against him before the King: he had renounced Magism to embrace Christianity; he had forbidden Christians to marry more than one wife; he cancelled the decrees of their judges and removed trials from their

jurisdiction; he baptized the Magi and made them Christians. By these accusations he made the King hate him. By order of the King he was imprisoned for seven years in Azerbaijan, from where he continued to direct church matters, performing miracles and corresponding with all regions by letter. He composed the canons of the Psalms in prison.

Mar Âbâ, aware of what had happened at the the time of Shîla, decreed that priests would not be married but remain celibate like Simeon bar Sabâ'i and those like him. One of the miracles he performed in prison: he was asked to help a pregnant woman was suffering from an internal illness and was becoming exhausted from the medicines and cures she had been subjected to; Mar Âbâ sent her a piece of bread and gave instructions that she should eat it; after three days she would be cured. And so she was.

In Azerbaijan there was an aged renegade bishop of Djordjan whom Mar Âbâ had deposed and excommunicated for shameful conduct, adultery and promiscuity, and because he had embraced Magism and taken on their manners. He gathered support to oppose Mar Âbâ, even to try to kill him and later claim that he had fled to Byzantium. Mar Âbâ learned of this and fled to the gate of the royal palace. The King was told of this and sent him a note asking why Mar Âbâ had not remained in his place of exile. Mar Âbâ replied that he had left because attempts were being made to kill him and that, if he were killed in secret, there would be no-one to accuse of his murder. Mar Âbâ submitted himself willingly to capital punishment imposed by the King, who told him to return to his place of exile and await the punishment of the Chief Mobed appropriate to a Christian convert who worshipped as God a man who had been crucified by the Jews.

But the Magi did not stop intriguing until the King put the Catholicos in chains, where he remained suffering for a long time. At length the King released him but also crucified several bishops and killed many Christians.

The reason for this persecution was: there was a ship on its return from India filled with precious objects of great value that was attacked by the Marzbâns; the owner of the ship went to the Byzantine Emperor and obtained⁴⁵ a letter from him for the Persian King that he might ask for them. They refused but were prevailed upon to give back small things.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Text has to be emended

⁴⁶ I do not understand the alternative reading suggested in the critical apparatus.

They then began to goad the King against the Catholicos and all the Christians for what had happened to them because of the Byzantines.

God struck Chosroes Anûshirwân with a serious life-threatening illness. He applied to Justinian for help and wrote asking for a competent doctor to cure him of his weight problem⁴⁷ so that he could once again breathe easily and enjoy the pleasures of life. Justinian sent Trikhoma.⁴⁸ Before he arrived, the Queen said to him: 'If the king offers you gold, silver, pearls or the riches of Khorâsân, do not accept them. I will pay you double. Ask him only to send back the Christian of Antioch who are his prisoners. If you do this, I will give you more gold than you could wish for.' The doctor attended the King and relieved his fat problem. Chosroes was delighted and asked him what he wanted. He asked for what the Queen had suggested. The King was angry and knitted his eyebrows. But he was loath to reject the request of someone who had cured him and whom he had invited to request anything he chose. The doctor realized that sending the prisoners back might be difficult, so he asked that villages be given to them. One of the assistants saw that there was an obligation to do what he asked and declared that he would make him abandon the request. The King entrusted the matter to him to do as he saw fit. He entrusted him with all the treasures so that he could take from them what was necessary to satisfy the doctor, who was summoned and offered pearls, silver and splendid garments: 'These will be of much more use to you than what you have asked for.' The doctor's base and vile soul was seduced by what he saw and he rejected the Queen's suggestion and took these things which it preferred to the souls of the afflicted. The Queen summoned him and said: 'Did I not assure you that I would satisfy your need for gold beyond your wishes and pay you double what the King was offering ? Nevertheless, though your ambition has made you renege on your word and you have not fulfilled my promise, I will pay you what I promised.' A great quantity of gold was brought immediately. It was melted until it became like water. The doctor was bound and made to drink it until his stomach could take no more. He died instantly.

One of the children of Chosroes rebelled against him and took Gundishapur, where he built fortifications and the residents supported him against his father. The Magi told the King

سمن افراط 47

48 Otherwise unknown, I think.

that the Catholicos had urged him to rebel. The King was angry and summoned the Catholicos and said: 'Since the people of Gundishapur do as they wish by taking my son's side, I will begin a persecution of Christians. I will punish you, their head.' 'You are right,' said the Catholicos. 'I am their head, as you say. But I do not deserve to be even their servant. How can you make me responsible for the crimes of an entire community ? Look, the King is head of the Magi and all other men. Now, is he responsible for the crimes of single one of them ?' The King was appeased and told him to write to the people of Gundishapur and not to side with this young madman. The Catholicos wrote to them and excommunicated them. They distanced themselves from the King's son and opened their gates to the royal army. The King felt admiration for this obedience and fear of excommunication and stopped harming Christians for some time.

Anûshirwân was then impelled by a demon to maltreat the Christians. He called the Catholicos: 'If you want me not to massacre Christians, go to Susa, to Gundishapur and the surroundings, impose a tax on your people and send it to me. Otherwise I will destroy their churches and make fire temples out of them.' The Catholicos, fearing that if he resisted what happened to Simeon bar Sabâ'i at the hands of Shapur would happen to him and his people. He collected large amounts of money and offered it to the King. But the King did not keep his promise and sent someone to torture them. The Catholicos felt mortal anguish and retired to the suburbs.

28. Dispute between Catholicos and a Magus.

The miracle that converted the Magus, who gave the Catholicos a fire temple.

There was a meeting between the Catholicos and one of the main and most illustrious Magi, who asked him: 'What persuaded you to embrace Christianity and reject the religion of your ancestors ?' The Catholicos replied that he had seen Christians rightly confessing One God, the Creator and Director of all things. That he had seen the Magi confessing two creatures: the sun and the moon. That they claimed that the universe had two authors, one good and one bad, and worshipped two created beings that were deaf, blind and without perception, intelligence or reason.

The Magus said: 'For me to follow you, I need you to show me an astonishing prodigy that will confirm the truth of your assertion.'

The Catholicos replied: 'Stop worshipping the fire and the sun, and the Creator will give you convincing proof of the truth.'

'How am I to renounce the fire, my god ?'

The Catholicos replied: 'I will stamp on it with my foot and he will be unable to harm me or be useful to me.'

'Impossible.'

'Good. Let us make a fire of wood with plentiful strong firebrands, and I will show you the power of the God I worship and the weakness of your gods.'

The Magus at once ordered a fire to be prepared, with lots of wood, in the fire temple, which is now the School of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Its flames reached up to the sky, and over them the Catholicos made the sign of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the hidden God and source of forgiveness. He took off his shoes and walked bravely over the fire, ridiculing its worshippers. He took the Magus by his hand and said to him: 'Walk with me. Do not be afraid. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of all that breathes and Disperser of darkness, will help us.' The Magus said: 'I am afraid for myself.' The Catholicos told him not to be afraid, but to walk in his footsteps.' He encouraged him like a good leader exhorting his troops before the enemy. He finally persuaded him to walk on the fire, in his footsteps. They walked in various directions making the sign of the Cross. When he saw the fire recede before his steps, the Magus believed and was baptized by the Catholicos with his entire family except for his brother and gave the Catholicos the property on which the miracle had happened. The Catholicos built a school on it with the money given to him by the Magus. He made a plaster Cross with his own hands, which the pupils used like a key to open the door of their spirit and allow instruction to penetrate when one of them found it difficult, and indeed God opened the spirit of those who took a fragment of the Cross. When the Cross was put in place, the house filled up with mice, cats and lizards, the demons who had been living in the fire temple. But Mar Âbâ took possession of it and the exorcized the demons, and they never dared to return. God replaced them with men of learning, letters and culture. The place where the fire worshippers had made their guttural cries became the repository of spiritual books of the church. The seat of the Chief Mobed was replaced by that of the fathers. All this happened after the debates in the presence of

the King between the Catholicos and this man, one of the nobles of his nation. The Catholicos was asked three questions, to which he triumphantly replied.

29. Question posed by the Catholicos Mar Âbâ

The Catholicos, after his successful reponse to the three questions, said to the Magus: 'I will ask you one question. If you can answer it, you will win. If not, you will be defeated before the King.' The Magus: 'Say what you have to say.' The Catholicos: 'What do you say of a woman who, after leaving the house with fire in her hand, is surprised by the rain, and then menstruation happens to her.⁴⁹ She is afraid to throw the fire to the ground lest the rain should put it out. What ought she to do, in your opinion ?' The Magus was unable to reply, and he was given three days to find a reply. But after the three days they were unable to give the Catholicos an answer. The victory was his, and he received the fire temple, having performed the miracle we have just mentioned, and built a school there. It was still standing when the Catholicos Ezekiel restored and rebuilt it.

It is said that the King was profoundly sad when his son rebelled. He used to say that his education had cost him much, that he had taken a lot of trouble to make sure that he stayed on the right path, that he hoped that he would succeed and make him happy, but that he had proved to be a bad son. He had no wish to console himself in spite of all the ways one used to dissipate one's sadness. But the saint had an ingenious stratagem. He told the King that he wanted to ask the Chief Mobed a question. The King agreed.

The saint said: 'Look, on the hearth there is a pot of water and beneath it is wood fire which makes the water boil. What does the boiling water say to the pot ? What does the pot say to the wood ? And what does the fire say ? We see the fire burning. We hear a sound and we notice the water boiling. Tell me now, what does each of these say to its fellow ?'

The Mobed was perplexed and said nothing.

The King, who had said nothing for several days, began to laugh: 'Among those who attend us, there is none as clever as you. What is the answer ? Tell me.'

'With pleasure. The boiling water says to the pot: *Am I not the reason why the clay from which you are made has become hard ? Without me you not would be a pot. So why do*

⁴⁹ Scher uses a delicate circumlocution. I have tried to translate as literally as possible, but I feel that there may be some cultural-anthropological dimension to this detail that simply eludes me.

you make me suffer and torment me ? The pot said to the wood: Is it not the water that makes trees grow with their branches, from which you come ? So why do you heat me and burn me unjustly and make me maltreat the water which has hardened my clay and made me into a pot ? The wood said to the fire: You are the one who has oppressed society because you have made us punish our fathers when we were happy with the heat of the sun in winter. When your heat became excessive, we changed our nature and repaid the good of our parents with bad. You are clearly the cause of injustice.'

The King understood what the Catholicos wanted to say, namely that it is difficult for parents to be protected from the wickedness of their children. 'You must support your son, for fingernails are not torn out without great pain and torture or the insides of an animal without causing death.' The King recognized the truth of these words, accepted his consolation and thanked him. He ordered the people of Gundishapur to withdraw their support of his son. As was said earlier, this was done.

The Catholicos was frequently troubled by priests, deacons and those who managed ecclesiastical matters.⁵⁰ He suffered from colic for several days and went to his rest - may God bless him. It was on one of the days of Firûzdejan, during which, according to the Magi, only the good and the virtuous die. When the King learned of his death, he ordered a funeral in honour of the saint. It was a magnificent, solemn and long funeral. He died in the night of the second Friday of Lent. Qiore took him to Hîra, where he was buried and a monastery built over his grave, which is still there. He was Catholicos for 16 years. In a funeral oration written for him the Catholicos Isho' barnûn said that he had been ordained at Hîra and had requested that he be buried there. He died in year 21 of Anûshirwân, year 863 of Alexander.

There is a story that the saint had brought from the barbarians a tall strong man clothed in rags. He was very gracious to him, made him shave and wash, gave a rough wollen garment to him and sent him to evangelize foreigners.⁵¹ After showing him how to address the King and present his vows, he introduced him. The King admired the wisdom, discernment and goodness of the Catholicos, for he had seen him before and knew who he was.⁵²

50 علوم البيعة: 'sciences of the church'

51 العجم: non-Arabs

52 Scher offers no information concerning the identity of the non-Arab stranger

30. His pupils

Narsai bishop of Anbâr; Jacob Metropolitan of Beith Garmai; Paul Metropolitan of Nisibis, Ezekiel, later Patriarch; Qiore, who founded a school at Hîra; Ramisho', the exegete who became bishop of Anbâr; Moses Bishop of Karkha in Susa; Barshabba Bishop of Shaherzor; David Metropolitan of Merv; Thomas of Edessa; Shubhalmârân Bishop of Kashkar; Sergius son of Sâhiq the doctor of Hîra; Jacob the penitent.⁵³ They were all pupils at his school, and Bar Sahde mentions them in his history.

31. Abraham of Nefthan and Job his pupil

A contemporary of this father (Mar Âbâ), Abraham came the people of Hazza⁵⁴ from the village of Beit Nefra and was related to those martyred in the time of Shapur at the hands of his brother Ardashir. He was old, venerable, an astute philosophe, devout and ascetic monk, he managed, with Abraham the Great,⁵⁵ to spread news of the rules and institutions of the monastic life in Persia. He changed monastic habits to distinguish them from those of heretics. In the time of Mar Eugene and his disciples, monks used to dress like Egyptian monks. These two monks redesigned monasteries and cells, which before them had been like those of Mar 'Abda and his peers. Abraham live in cave at Hazza. He travelled to Jerusalem and Egypt, where he met saints in the desert. On returning to his cave, he stayed there for 30 years, living on bread and wild herbs, healthy and free from illness. He was moved by a vision to retreat to the mountains of Hazza to evangelize the pagans there. He summoned them to worship the true God and renounce their error. They were deaf to his appeal and persecuted him. Nevertheless he admired them and remained among them for several days without eating. He then said to them: 'Here is my staff. I will put it on your sacrifices. If the fire consumes your sacrifices but does not burn my staff, will you promise to believe what I say and respond to my appeal ?' They promised. It happened as he had

53 الحزين. This is the translation of Scher, but the only meanings I can find in the Arabic dictionaries of E.W. Lane and H. Wehr are 'sad, mournful'. It is used also in section 39.

54 In the translation: Adiabene, an area in what may now be called Iraqi Kurdistan, with its main city of Arbela (Erbil)

55 See earlier no. 18

said, and they allowed themselves to be baptized. He built churches and monasteries for them and wrote books on the ascetic life. He died in the mountains of Hazza. His shroud was taken in the night and buried in a village church.

When his disciple Job arrived, he transformed the cave into a monastery, still known as Rabban Job. He was from Daisam,⁵⁶ a Metropolitan see in Persia. His father, at the time of Anûshirwân son of Qabad, had been a pearl dealer, was wealthy, with slaves and a hospital in his country. One day Job fell ill and vowed that if he were cured he would renounce the world and the vanities he had just been contemplating. His cure, due to God, was the beginning of his salvation, as the blindness of Paul had caused him to believe. He renounced everything he had and went to Abraham of Nefthar, who gave him the tonsure, together with his two disciples, Isaiah and Elisha. He withdrew to his cell to live alone. He learned the monastic life of the saints.

Hearing of the monastery of Abraham, he went there to seek the blessing of the saints there and learn the rules of the monastic life. He stayed there some time with Dadisho' and Mar Babai. After some time he returned to his cell and translated the rules and writings of Abraham from Syriac into Persian. His fame spread and many monks went to him. After the death of his two companions, they remained near his cave. He made his cave into a monastery and introduced the rule of Mar Babai there. He predicted the hour of his death. In a single day he cured 31 sick people who had come for his help. He said to his assistants: 'Do not reject the request of Job the weak. The Lord Christ will today grant a cure to all the sick.' He made an announcement in the Hazza villages: 'Let those who wish to see Job come to him on Wednesday of the last week of Mar Elias,⁵⁷ for he has something secret to tell them.' The Sunday before that day, after reciting the office with the two brothers and eating with them, he blessed them with the sign of the Cross and withdrew to his cell. On Wednesday, the people drawn by his promise, crowded around his cell. After three hours, when it was clear that nobody was coming to speak to them, they went into his cell and found him dead, wrapped and prostrate before the Cross. They prayed over him and buried him in the sanctuary⁵⁸ before the altar. We ask God to have mercy on us through the prayers of this

56 Scher: Riwardshir (SW Iran)

57 Liturgical designation (Scher): after Pentecost are the seven weeks of the Apostles, the seven weeks of summer and the seven weeks of Mar Elias.

58 الهيكل

venerable saint, to forgive us our sins, to deliver us and hear our prayers.

32. Joseph the Catholicos,
who was deposed and is the 28th in number

This man spent most of life in Byzantium, where he studied medicine. On returning to Nisibis he went into a monastery and became attached to a Nabatean King, who functioned as the Marzbân in this area. He honoured Joseph because of his dress and even presented him to Chosroes Anûshirwân, who had just fallen ill. The King sent for Joseph, who treated him successfully. People were deceived by his appearance. After the death of Mar Âbâ, the Christians asked for permission to elect a new Catholicos. Joseph was nominated by Anûshirwân and consecrated Catholicos. In year 2 of his period of office, the fathers in synod ratified 22 canons concerning church administration. He ruled for 3 years with great prudence, but then he changed and began to receive gifts,⁵⁹ treat bishops with disrespect and humiliate priests and allow himself things contrary to the laws of the Church and Christianity.

Anûshirwân's aversion to Joseph began when Joseph visited people in prison who had been put there by the King for revealing one of his secrets. Joseph turned to Badanfarouj the great Marzbân, who was well respected by the King. With gifts and his medical skill he asked him for help in driving out certain bishops and Metropolitans from their sees, and the Marzbân obliged.

He then assailed the priests and bound them with halters to lead them to stables which he had built full of straw. He told them to eat forage, because they were animals devoid of intelligence and reason.⁶⁰ He began to shave their head and soil them (God curse him !) and laugh out loud like a madman.⁶¹ He seized Simeon bishop of Anbâr, known for his piety and purity, and left him in prison for a long time. After a long captivity he set up an altar in his hiding place to celebrate Mass and the Eucharist on all Sundays and feast days. One day the cruel Joseph entered his hiding place. The monks had just celebrated Mass.

59 Critical apparatus: رشوة

60 Ar. بيان: usually signifies 'clarity' or something of the sort.

61 There are several terms of abuse, but I think one is enough.

Before the offering Joseph took the host and assaulted the bishops. He fouled the Eucharist beneath his filthy impure feet and overturned the chalice - may he be visited by the wrath of God. We pray that God will deliver us from his crimes. This bishop, victim of an injustice perpetrated by this wretch misleadingly called Catholicos had to drink from glasses of bitterness until he died in prison and went to his rest, where he would be rewarded for his endurance and be revenged on his oppressor.

Joseph then assaulted the bishop of Zâb, whom he drove from his see and replaced him with a certain Ezekiel, who because of his social aplomb, medical profession and knowledge of Persian had an entrée to the court and made a friend of the King. Chosroes sent him with divers to fish for pearls. He found one of rare wonder and great value. He rose even more in the estimation of the King and became a permanent member of his staff.

Mar Mâlekh bishop of Darabgerd⁶² came to ask Ezekiel to obtain for him a royal decree to suspend the persecution in his diocese. Ezekiel, as was his custom, obtained the decree. But Joseph became angry at this and went to see the chief Magus: 'If I am the head of the Christians, it is my task to take care of and regulate their affairs. Why did you let this bishop obtain a royal decree to protect them and allow them to practise their religion ?' He took the decree from Mar Mâlekh. The people in Persia, when they learned of this, cut out his name from the diptych⁶³ and refused to obey him and were unanimous in pointing out his ignominy. May God send him to pit of hell to be with those like him.

The crimes of this loathsome man increased daily. The fathers and the faithful joined together to send him three messengers to lay bare their feeling, to force him to say what he planned, to explain himself, to renounce his past conduct in order to resume his responsibilities. But he received them with contempt, shouted at them and did not listen to them. They sent another three messengers, whom he treated with the utmost arrogance, and a further three, whom he treated with his customary contempt.

The reason for this meeting and correspondence with Joseph was his testimony against a

⁶² SW Iran

⁶³ Ar. *ḥaṭṭah*: lit. 'his sermon'. Scher takes it to mean removal of the name from the diptych, which symbolizes that the congregation is no longer in communication with its bishop.

Christian that he had stolen a precious object of great value from the royal treasury. The matter had been relayed to the King, who had judged him innocent and released him. Joseph was convinced by the false testimony of a non-Christian against a Christian. The King had then ordered several Christians to bring the Catholicos before them and punish him for his wickedness. Joseph protested in vain against this summons, he was not heard and the fathers collectively entered into correspondence with him, as we have just said. Paul the Metropolitan of Nisbis and other Metropolitans and absent bishops wrote to him to fulfil the order of the King. They excommunicated him unanimously, stripped him of his dignity and deprived him of the degrees of priesthood. They anathematized all who in future received baptism and the Eucharist from him, invalidated all his excommunications and excommunicated Isaac, a supporter of his. Joseph disregarded this excommunication and continued ordaining priests and deacons. The Christians complained about this to the King.

Moses of Nisibis made use of a clever parable: 'A King receives a poor man and gives him his friendship. He then gives him one of his elephants. The poor man takes the elephant home. But the elephant is too large to go through the door of his house. In any case, he cannot feed the elephant. Greatly embarrassed, he thinks about it and returns to the King with the elephant, asking the courtiers to take it back and give him cash instead, because he he has discovered certain aspects of this elephant that he is unable to deal with: his house is too small, the door is too narrow and he is unable to feed him. The King agrees and takes back the elephant.' When he heard this story, the King smiled and understood what Moses meant.

Moses continued: 'We are poor. This is the elephant that the King has given us. We are frustrated in the hopes we placed in it and his supremacy. Let the King be kind enough to take it back and we will be grateful to him.'

As a result the King deposed and prevented him from ruling the Christians. He removed from him the possibility of exercising his power over those who did not like his arrogance. God thus punished him, as he deserved. In the month of Shabat of year 36 of Chosroes Anûshirwân preparations were made to elect a new Catholicos. Joseph had been tolerated for twelve years, from his elevation to the position to the day when God delivered

the people from him, uprooting him by means of anathema. After his excommunication⁶⁴ it was unanimously agreed to elect Ezekiel bishop of Zawâbe.⁶⁵ The supporters of Joseph, who were irreligious, refused to accept this. The faithful began to quarrel. The King forbade them to elect a Catholicos until they were all agreed to depose Joseph. Mari of Kashkar was interim head of the Church for three years until God had rooted out Joseph by death, who went to His Lord to find his works.⁶⁶ His punishment lasted for 15 years, some say 18. He was buried at Anbâr.

During this unspeakable period, while Justian was Emperor, Chosroes invaded Antioch, sacked it and took prisoners back to Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He built a new town for them, like Antioch, and called it Antiachosroes⁶⁷ and settled them there. It came to be known as Rome, which was a source of great distress to the Emperor.

In year 10 of his reign there was a plague in his land and the lands of Persia, India and Ethiopia. There appeared in the palm of the hand three black spots in the hollow of the flesh like blood and, while people were walking, they opened their mouths and fell down dead. Others suffered from ulcers so bad that the skin came away from the flesh. Towns and villages became deserted. Property remained abandoned, because nobody wanted to take it. People, afraid of death, fled from place to place. Those who escaped from the plague in one place were struck by a terrible illness in another, which made them sigh after death. The evil was terrible and the punishment universal, as David the prophet said: *He sent the angel of evil against them, opened the bad paths and did not preserve their souls from death.*⁶⁸

Death first struck the poor and the needy, and the rich had to bury them. It soon attacked the rich. When someone left the house, he wrote the name of his family and house on a piece of paper which he put round his neck so that, if he died, his family would be known and his remains taken to them. Often bodies remained for several days without burial on the roads and the stench made the roads impassable. This scourge spread throughout the

64 'catharsis' قترسة.

65 زوابى

66 A literal version of the somewhat dark Arabic phrase: ليلقى عمله

67 Probaby 'Antioch-Chosroes'

68 Ps. 78,49

regions.

This is second anecdote about the plagues. The townspeople of Beit Nabt were all killed by the plague. There were only seven adults and a boy left. Driven by fear to take flight, they collected their goods and left them in one house. Seven of them died there. Only the boy was left, and he fled instantly, but was brought back to the gate of the town by a human form who would not let him leave. One of the dignitaries of the town, who was not there, learned of this. He came and stopped before the gate with his slaves. He sent one of them to find out what had happened in the house. The slave found the boy sitting there. He asked him where the house with all the goods was. The boy showed him. The slave took as much as he could carry, but was unable to leave. The man who had prevented the boy before appeared. The slave thought that the man was stopping them because of the goods he had just taken and went back to the house with the boy, where both died. Those outside who were waiting for the slave to return were saved.

The plague caused enormous damage. The gravediggers were buried in the graves they had dug for the dead.

At this point John, a relative of Mar Narsai, died. Chosroes was also struck by an illness called Shar'ûta,⁶⁹ with loss of blood. This illness raged at Alexandria so intensely that it made people deranged and look as if they were drunk. Justinian appointed a gravedigger and gave him a lot of money. He threw many corpses into the ditches he was digging. The suffering of the world was indescribable and immeasurable. It is said that three people engaged by a courtier to bury the bodies earned 40 dinars by carrying away and burying the dead, and that even as they were dividing the money people kept dying.

The plague is said to have lasted for three and a half years. Finally Almighty God had mercy on His creatures and delivered them. At the time of David God said to the angel who had stretched his hand over Jerusalem⁷⁰ to destroy it:⁷¹ *You have destroyed much.*

Withdraw your hand. People have abandoned their crimes and sins.

⁶⁹ A Syriac word for 'plague': ܫܪܘܬܐ.

⁷⁰ اورشلم. The Biblical name seems to be used when there is a Biblical reference involved. Otherwise, the other form used is: بيت المقدس.

⁷¹ 2 Sam. 24,16

Bar Sahde has a story about how Joseph the Catholicos helped to bury the dead thrown into the streets and on the roads, the only worthwhile thing he did. The plague was followed by a devastating famine at the time of Justinian, when no amount of food could satisfy people. In year 26 of his reign the plague killed so many oxen that it was necessary to use donkeys, camels and other beasts to plough the field. People fled from one town to another.

One of the unfortunate events of this unfortunate time was the destruction of Tripolis, situated on the seaside. It became the grave of its residents. People tried to flee but the earth subsided beneath their feet and they were engulfed by the waters.

When Justinian had finished his wars, he wrote a book on the Two Natures, in which he professed a union and inclined towards the doctrine of Julian, the teacher of Severus. He sent it to Anastasius bishop of Antioch, ordering him to convene the bishops and force them to sign it. Anastasius rejected it, and Justinian wrote another one, in which he said that one of the persons (of the Trinity) had suffered with his body and that Almighty God is limited and passible. He sent this book with one of his generals to force the fathers to put their signatures to it.

It is said that Justinian, after the conclusion of peace with Chosroes, asked him to send him some Persian scholars. He sent Paul of Nisibis; Mari of Balad; Bar Suma of Qardû; Isaiah the exegete at Seleucia-Ctesiphon; Isho'yahb of Arzun, who became Catholicos of the Orient; and Babai of Sigar. Justinian received them all with honour. The dispute lasted three days. The Orientals laid out the orthodox faith. Justinian said to Babai: 'I want you to tell me the passages of Scripture and Commentaries quoted by the fathers.' Babai quoted many passages, which the Emperor was inclined to accept. He understood from them that nature ⁷² was unable to exist without the hypostasis⁷³ or the hypostasis without nature and that, as a result, the Two Natures could only be a single hypostasis. He heard them and sent them back in great honour. Justinian then changed his mind and anathematized

⁷² جوهر

⁷³ فنوم

Diodorus and his companions. After 39 years as Emperor he died. Some say that Abraham and John, disciples of Narsai, were among those sent to the Emperor, who approved of their explanations, praised what they had to say and showered gifts on them at the same time as Paul.

33. The Emperor Justin

He was a relative of Justinian⁷⁴ and began his reign in year 877 of Alexander. He professed the Two Natures and exiled the followers of Severus and sent back to their sees those whom Justinian had convened to subscribe to his book. He then changed his mind and anathematized Diodorus and his followers. He was attracted by Justinian's doctrine and wrote a book in which he defended Chalcedon. However, his belief was that the body of Our Lord was incorruptible. He suffered from mental problems in year 9 of his reign and, because of his illness, he was unable to go forth and repel Chosroes, who had invaded his empire and destroyed many towns. His madness made him bark like a dog and bite anyone who came near him. A house of teak⁷⁵ covered in gold was built for him in the form of a box with doors, where he enclosed himself whenever he had an attack of madness, and he spent his time listening to stories. The affairs of the empire began to fall into disrepair because his illness became worse and he co-opted a man called Tiberius in year 16 of his reign. He died after a reign of three years.

34. The Patriarch Eutychius

When Eutychius resigned his office, he was replaced by John. The latter, who was orthodox, convened the fathers and anathematized the Jacobites. He died after 14 years of administering the Church. A group then formed around Eutychius, whose services to Justinian during the latter's illness were well known, to ask him to resume office. In his time the affairs of the Church were in good order, and he died after five years in office. He was in office for a total of twelve years. At that time there were certain scholars, whose work, for the sake of brevity, I have not mentioned and who wrote various works against

⁷⁴ Ar. قرابة. Justin II, Justinian's nephew

⁷⁵ ساج

Severus. The Church has collected their works.

35. Bâbûkir

He interpreted the Old Testament and translated it from Hebrew into Syriac. He later embraced the teaching of Ebion, who claimed that the humanity of Christ was stripped of his divinity and that he was of the same race as the charlatan known as Paul the apostle.

In this period the fathers convened to decide upon the erroneous teaching that the soul of man is mortal like his body and that it will be resurrected with him. Origen had already refuted these people, but in so doing had invented a worse teaching of the transmigration of a soul of one body to another.

This Origen was an exegete at Alexandria. After mutilating himself he was driven out by the Patriarch Demetrius, who forbade him to teach, on the grounds that 'this man is a murderer, for God created this member to be the respectable cause of procreation'.⁷⁶ This saint did not exceed the boundaries, but was obeying the instruction⁷⁷ given by Simon Peter to his pupil Clement in the rules he established.

36. Ezekiel the 29th Catholicos

This father was bishop of Zawâbe and disciple of Mar Âbâ the Catholicos. After the death of Joseph, from the Catholicate had been taken away, there was a synod to elect a replacement. Ishai the scholar was elected. But Paul of Nisibis and other fathers were opposed to this and wanted to keep their choice, Ezekiel, whom they had elected when they met to depose Joseph and who was beloved of and esteemed by Chosroes, who had once sent him to Bahrain and Yamâma, from which Ezekiel had brought him pearls. The chief physician Marûzi, known as Nûrûzi, informed the King of the choice that had just been made and asked him to authorize him. The fathers convened and consecrated him Patriarch. He was astute in worldly matters, a scholarly man, who conducted the affairs of the Church well.

⁷⁶ Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6,8: Demetrius is said to have thought the action ἀτοπώτατος (quite unnatural).

⁷⁷ The opinion expressed here seems to confirm the admiration that made the bishops in Caesarea ordain Origen presbyter despite the apparent opposition of Demetrius.

Everyone was happy with him, even those who had opposed him at the time of the deposition of Joseph. He was tolerant of those who had been ordained by Joseph and was satisfied with making them stand before the altar and saying over them the prayers of forgiveness without repeating their ordination.

In year 45 of Chosroes he convened the fathers and established 36 canons for church discipline. He travelled to the mountain⁷⁸ with Chosroes. He then did something shameful with regard to the fathers, towards whom his conduct was coarse.

He accompanied Chosroes to Nisibis when he attacked Dara to capture it and drive out the Byzantines. Paul of Nisibis welcomed the Catholicos with great honour and pomp and took him to his cell, from there they entered the church. Paul mounted the pulpit⁷⁹ and delivered a fine discourse, in which he said, among other things: 'Christians. Christ has come to visit⁸⁰ you today. Purify your bodies. Remove your old clothes and increase your ...'⁸¹ The assistants understood that he wished to flatter the Catholicos but took him for an ignoramus and regarded him as unworthy of respect or consideration. They even began to look down on him. The Catholicos swore an oath that if the King managed to capture Dara, he would depose Paul and remove him from office as Metropolitan. I⁸² think that the Catholicos resented Paul, because the latter had said: 'Increase your ...' Paul learned of this and devoted himself to prayer and fasting, prostrating himself night and day before Our Lord Christ and asking Him to let him die and hasten his end before the capture of Dara that he might not be anathematized. At the very moment when Chosroes took the town, the siege of which had cost the Persian King dearly, the angel came to take away the soul of the Metropolitan Paul - God bless him. So, by his death he escaped the terrible anathema threatened by the Catholicos.

At this time Isho'yahb was exegete at Nisibis. His successor was Abraham, son of the blacksmith, who was succeeded by the well-known Hanânâ, who had 300 students, some

78 الجبل. Scher has capitalized the French word. I do not know if it refers to a particular place.

79 البيم. Loan word from Greek (βῆμα) via Syriac

80 According to J. Haywood and H. Nahmad *A new Arabic grammar* (1965) ch. 12 §10 the form used here (قد زاركم) seems to have the same meaning as the English Present Perfect, which usually expresses the present consequence of a past action.

81 دواشنكم: I cannot find the word in Lane's dictionary. H. Wehr gives دشن, meaning 'consecrate, inaugurate', but only as a verb. The only nominal form he offers is تدشين. Scher: 'Increase your new (clothes).'

82 This may be the first instance of the narrator expressing an opinion.

of them very powerful about whom there are *vitae*.

When the conceitedness⁸³ of this father Ezekiel increased, the pain in his eyes from either covering or spreading drew near. He called the virtuous and brave fathers blind. Christ tested him with water that came down from his eyes and He inflicted on him the bitterness of blindness. He was blind for about two years. He died after this. His period of office was 11 years. Some say 20. He was taken to Hîra and buried there. According to some at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. This was in year 13 of Hormizdad son of Anushirwân. At that time the affairs of the church were in good condition.

37. The reign of Hormizdad

Chosroes died after a reign of 47 years. His successor Hormizdad proved to be favourable to Christians. The Magi found this intolerable and complained. The King, to make them understand that the empire could not rely on the Magi alone, quoted this proverb to them: 'As a throne with four legs cannot be stable on the two in front if it does not also rest on the two behind, as also the religion of the Magi will not be stable if there is no other religion to counterbalance it. Beware of resisting the orders I have given for the protection of Christians, observance of their laws and practice of their customs, for they are faithful and obedient.'⁸⁴ Hormizdad honoured Ezekiel greatly. Anûshirwân had designated him as his successor, as his father had done with him. He was crowned after the death of his father, in the days known as Firûzdejan in a fire temple at Gundishapur. His brothers paid their respects him. My God have mercy on him.

38. The death of Chosroes Anûshirwân and events in Byzantium before and after

The war between Byzantium and Persia continued. Anûshirwân, three days after the capture and destruction of Dara, invaded Byzantine territory. When he saw that the

⁸³ Or, perhaps 'blindness'. I have to admit that I am not sure what this means

⁸⁴ The source of the 'proverb' is given as Tabari

Byzantines had just devastated an area of more than of 50 parasangs⁸⁵ around Mosul and Beit 'Arabaye, he became angry and gathered his troops to attack Callinicum,⁸⁶ which he destroyed with the surrounding area. He also devastated Caesarea and pillaged it. The Byzantine forces who caught up with him cut off his escape route and surrounded him completely, but he was able to swim across the Euphrates with a large part of his army. Many soldiers and animals were drowned. Others were pursued by the Byzantines and massacred by them. They seized the fire temple that the King had brought with him and where he hid his treasure. Sixty Persian officers were executed and the fire extinguished. Chosroes left Byzantium and his great sorrow caused a chest problem from which he died three and a half years later. The Byzantines in Antioch, whom he had taken captive and for whom he had built the city, gathered to pay their last respects, according to the custom of the Christians,⁸⁷ with censers and candles, lined up along the route to their final resting place.

He reigned 47 years and a few months. Maxims and proverbs have been written about him, and these are read by people the whole time. It is said that Anûshirwân saw bad omens and had astonishing visions. One day he was sitting on his throne, with his crown on his head, and a large dog stood in front of him and then disappeared. The gatekeepers and chamberlains, who were punished for this, said that they did not know how this could have happened. It is also said that on another occasion he saw a hideously ugly man in rags approach him on the throne, come up and sit down beside him. He had no idea how this happened. This was all in the time of his father.

39. Daniel the penitent*

While Ezekiel the Catholicos was still living: Daniel the penitent, who performed miracles and wonders, built a monastery on the royal road⁸⁸ in a difficult place called Besloi and

85 The parasang in Xenophon (*Anabasis*) was calculated in 1920 by Kenneth Mason of the Royal Geographical Society as about 2½ miles. From the little I have read the ancient parasang seems to me a unit of measurement that was far from standard.

86 City founded by Seleucus Kallinikos, now al Raqqa (الرقة)

87 على عدة النصارى. It is difficult to believe that a Christian writing for Christians about Christians would feel it necessary to say this.

88 From Susa to the Aegean. Herodotus *Histories* 5, 52ff. has a fairly detailed description of it. The irony for the Persians was it was the road used by Alexander in his conquest of Persia.

gathered disciples⁸⁹ in it; Abimelek built a monastery at the gates of Nisibis; and Simeon founded a monastery in the hills of Arûkh. This information can be found in the book written by Bar Sahde.

40. Rabban Qûsra

This saint was originally from Niniveh and lived at the time of Chosroes Anûshirwân and his son Hormizdad. From childhood he was devoted to the Scriptures. When he grew up he sought out Rabban Job, the disciple of Abraham of Nethfar. He learned the monastic life from him and spent 15 years with him, serving the brothers and eating only bread and water. He wears a sleeveless tunic, converted many Jacobites at Niniveh to the true faith and performed many miracles.

It is said for example that one day as he passing by some shepherds eating meat. They invited him to join them. He agreed because of the oath⁹⁰ and ate three mouthfuls. The monks with him disapproved of his conduct and felt a certain contempt for him. They had to Cross the Tigris to get from Niniveh to the garden. He made the sign of the Cross over the water, sat down on his cloak which he had just spread out, and after having taken aside the monks who had rebuked him for eating meat, and went through the water with them without getting wet. The guards of the town saw this and thought he was a god.

He then built a large sanctuary, where two monks came to live with him. At that time there were no building opposite the garden. It was Chosroes who built many buildings where people could stay. When the Arabs invaded, taking prisoners, many took refuge around the saint. During the attack, one of the drew his sword to kill the saint but his hand froze. His hand was cured by the saint, who prayed for him whenever he could. It was this that ensured the release of all the prisoners and booty to his charge. He predicted the founding of Mosul, its glory and the end of Persian domination.

When the Arabs ruled, they added many buildings where Chosroes had built and called it Mosul, which became a town. It is said that this saint during Lent ate only fruit.⁹¹ He died

89 الاسكولانيين

90 اليمين. I do not know which oath is meant.

91 According to H. Wehr this word (النقل) means 'dried fruit'.

an old man and was buried in his monastery, known as Rabbān Qûsri, which is still the see of the Metropolitans of Mosul.